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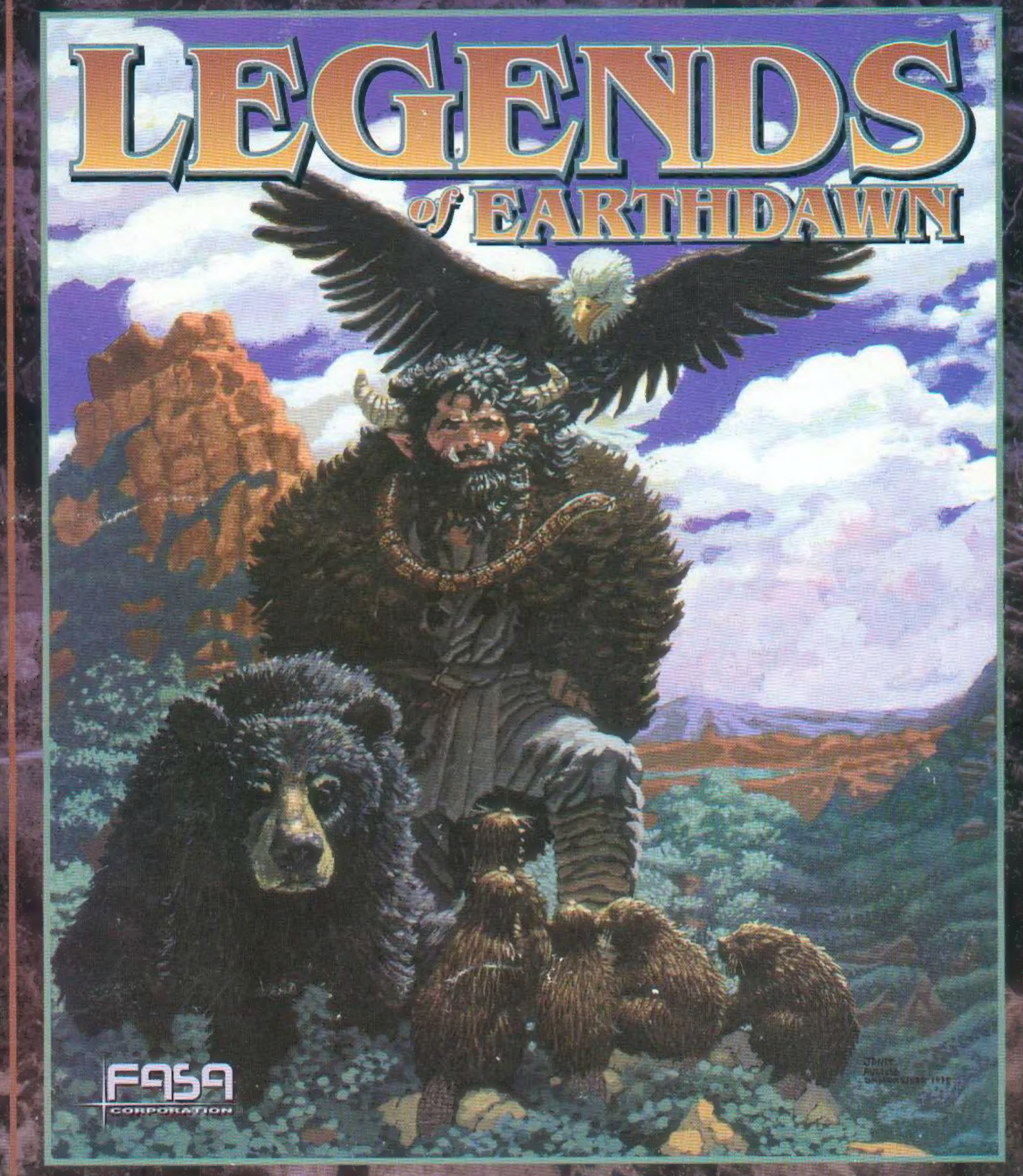

LEGENDS of EARTHDAWN™

FASA CORPORATION

VOLUME ONE • AN EARTHDAWN SUPPLEMENT

LEGENDS OF EARTHDAWN®

FASA CORPORATION

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SUBJECT GUIDE

The categories in this subject guide highlight the primary elements of each legend. Race of Origin refers to the race that most commonly tells the story.

CATEGORIES

Race of Origin
Legendary Name-givers
Magical Treasure
Horrors
Creatures
Passions
Discipline
Place

LEGENDS

The Passion's Dance
Race of Origin (Human)
Passions (Jaspree)
Place (Servos Jungle)

The Bloody Coin
Race of Origin (Troll)
Magical Treasure
Horrors

The Bravery of Nelsen Long-Ears
Race of Origin (Ork)
Legendary Name-givers
Magical Treasure

How Thystonius Gave Us His Spear
Race of Origin (Ork)
Magical Treasure
Passions (Thystonius)

Baby, Baby, Anointed in Sand
Race of Origin (T'skrang)
Horrors

Valvidius, King of Thieves
Legendary Name-givers
Magical Treasure
Passions (Vestrial)
Discipline (Thief)
Place (Kratas)

The Shackled Feet of Friendship
Race of Origin (T'skrang)
Magical Treasure
Place (Thera)

The Questor and the Magician
Legendary Name-givers
Magical Treasure

Ciarra Shy-Ru
Race of Origin (Dwarf)
Legendary Name-givers
Magical Treasure
Horrors

Parliment of Mermaids
Race of Origin (T'skrang)
Creatures
Place (Serpent River)

T'selas Vriimon and the Vrykanogen
Race of Origin (T'skrang)
Creatures

The King Who Ruled the Passions
Race of Origin (Any)
Passions (All)
Place (Thamos)

The Way of the Beasts
Race of Origin (Any)
Discipline (Beastmaster)

The Grass Bridge
Race of Origin (Human)
Horrors
Passions (Jaspree)

Astendar's Devotion
Race of Origin (Any)
Passions (Astendar)

Lyllaria's Mirror
Race of Origin (Human)
Magical Treasure
Horrors

The Dance of Korrencia
Race of Origin (Elf)
Legendary Name-givers
Discipline (Troubadour)
Place (Thera)

The Fire Pool
Race of Origin (Any)
Place (Mountains)

Lisar's Wondrous Pack of Tales
Race of Origin (Troll)
Legendary Name-givers
Magical Treasure

The Nameless Lad
Race of Origin (Human)
Legendary Name-givers
Horrors

The Lost Dream of Wyrm Wood
Race of Origin (Elf)
Place (Wyrm/Blood Wood)

How Lor'jak Bonetusk Found His Passion
Race of Origin (Troll)
Legendary Name-givers
Passions (Garlen)

The Love of Tonlaa and Enard
Race of Origin (Any)
Legendary Name-givers

Justice of Horrors
Race of Origin (Any)
Horrors

The Heart of Heroes
Race of Origin (Any)
Magical Treasure

The Horror Storm
Race of Origin (Any)
Magical Treasure
Horrors
Place (Tisoara)

The Brightest Star in the Sky
Race of Origin (Any)
Place (Thera)

The Pipes of Wrongness
Race of Origin (Any)
Magical Treasure
Horrors

New Sun in the Sky
Race of Origin (T'skrang)
Magical Treasure

The Book of Scales
Race of Origin (Any)
Magical Treasure
Horrors
Dragons

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INTRODUCTION

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Legends unite the people of Barsaive with their past and point the way toward their future. Inspired by legends, the heroes of Barsaive fight to reclaim their world from the devastation of the Scourge and to free it from the remaining Horrors. These heroes, in turn, spawn the legends that will inspire Barsaive's future generations.

Legends of Earthdawn, Volume I, presents thirty of Barsaive's legends recounted in the form of stories, songs and poems told or sung by troubadours and storytellers. The legends give players and gamemasters insight into the cultures and history of Barsaive, and can add atmosphere to any **Earthdawn** adventure or campaign.

Most importantly, these stories provide a rich source of adventure ideas. The second half of the book, titled **Game Information**, provides suggestions for incorporating legends of **Earthdawn** in adventures and campaigns. These suggestions, however, merely scratch the surface of the countless possibilities these stories present. You, the gamemaster, determine the truth behind each legend and you decide how much or little of a legend to use and how to introduce it in your game.

THE PASSION'S DANCE

Fourteen generations past, before the gitta devoured the world and forced us under the earth, my foremother saw strangers come to the Servos Jungle. The strangers were beloved of Jaspree, whom we call the God of the Tree. They came to build a home among the wild things, whom they called sisters and brothers, and the God blessed them, helping them to raise a great temple. This temple grew like a great tree from the heart of the jungle, and all the living things of the land, water and sky found a haven there. Pleased with his servants, the God of the Tree gave them the power to raise green life from barren earth, as well as many other gifts. Soon the people came from the lands all around the Servos, seeking the blessings of Jaspree's beloved and bringing gifts to them.

As word of the great temple spread farther away from our jungle, those whose hearts were tainted began to whisper about the wondrous gifts it contained. What were these gifts? Gold and silver? Rich jewels? Precious things made by Name-givers' hands? And as these evil voices whispered and wondered, tales of great riches hidden at the temple were told again and again and again.

In time, such tales reached the ears of Barlok the Cruel, headman of a fierce tribe of orks that we call the Irontusks. The more Barlok heard of Jaspree's temple, the more he desired the wealth he believed it held. The Passion Chorrolis entered Barlok's heart and soul, inflaming his desire until Barlok led his people into the jungle to claim Jaspree's treasures for his own.

Barlok and his people fell upon the temple like a storm, destroying everything they touched as a hurricane uproots and shatters even the mightiest trees. The kind strangers called upon all the powers of the God of the Tree, but greedy Chorrolis gave heart to the destroyers and they triumphed over Jaspree's servants. When the battle-madness left the orks, not one part of the great temple still stood. The peaceful home of the god's beloved was a ruin of blood and trampled earth, shrouded with smoke and carrion-eating birds. No living creature moved within the bounds of the temple, save for the last survivor among Jaspree's slaughtered faithful.

As Barlok walked among the ruins in search of gold and jewels, the last of Jaspree's beloved struggled to rise from the blood-soaked earth. Even as her life bled from her wounds, she called upon the God of the Tree with the last of her strength. "This curse I lay upon you," she said to Barlok. "You came in search of riches, though we had none that you could take. Your search will never end; you will seek endlessly through the jungle for a prize you will never find. From now until the day you die, you will not leave this place." As the last word left her mouth, she fell to the earth and died. And Barlok laughed, for he believed in sharper weapons than words. But he did not laugh for long.

Though he searched all day and night for the riches of the temple, Barlok the Cruel found nothing. Grumbling, he led his followers out of the depths of the Servos Jungle, only to find himself wandering down a path that had not been there before. Barlok turned another way, but he and his men soon lost their way again. Everywhere, strange trails appeared before them, and all the paths they traveled down vanished behind them. The trees seemed to shift and move, the leaves overhead hid the sky so they could not see the sun nor the stars. No matter which way the destroyers went, they found themselves still in the jungle's dark heart. At the bidding of the slain questor's curse, even the gentlest jungle beasts became fierce and vicious. And the God of the Tree sent driving rain to drown the orks in misery and hardened the earth so they would find no rest.

My foremother told me that the killers of Jaspree's servants died within the jungle of injury, starvation, and at each other's hands. From the days of my foremother, who saw these things happen, to this telling of the tale, we have called the ruined temple the Passion's Dance, because the jungle dances around the ruins to bewilder those who wander too close. The trees move and paths disappear, dancing the dance of confusion to keep strange folk away from the sacred ground where Jaspree's beloved died.

THE BLOODY COIN

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Centuries ago, as the Long Night drew close to Barsaive, the trolls of the village of Chkrak made ready to enter their kaer. They built it well and filled it with every needful thing, and only one worry troubled them: what to do with the silver pieces that belonged to every family. After many nights of talking around the Gathering Fire, the people and the elders agreed to put all the silver together and keep it in one place, to safeguard it for each family's descendants when the Long Night finally ended.

When the people of Chkrak emerged from the kaer hundreds of years later, they could all talk of nothing except the claiming of each family's silver. Some wanted the silver given out immediately; others wanted to rebuild the village and their lives before taking back their coin. After much often quarrelsome discussion, the elders declared that they would give out the silver after a week of celebration giving thanks to the Passions for deliverance from the Scourge.

Beikadt, a young troll impatient for a life of adventure, disagreed. He wanted his family's silver immediately. He had waited all his life to hold a fortune in his hands and did not want that glorious moment delayed for any reason. As all the other villagers made ready for the Passion-feast, Beikadt went to the chief elder and spoke his mind. The chief elder sharply refused Beikadt's demand, and the young troll stormed off in a seething rage.

To the village's misfortune, a Horror lurked nearby, watching and waiting for the right moment to attack the people. Seeing Beikadt walk off in anger, the Horror disguised itself as one of Beikadt's fellow villagers—another young troll, Named Terrin—and followed him. The Horror fed Beikadt's anger, claiming that he had overheard some of the elders saying they would not give out the silver at the end of the feast. Instead, they would keep it all in its safe place, supposedly for the good of the village. The elders were stalling, it said, looking for a way to keep all the silver for themselves. But why should they have it all? Why shouldn't Beikadt have it? He deserved it! Wasn't he the only troll in the whole village with any sense? All night, the disguised Horror whispered these lies in Beikadt's ears until the Horror's evil influence and his own anger drove Beikadt insane. As the first rays of dawn turned the black sky gray, Beikadt proposed to the Horror that they steal the silver and split it between them. When the Horror eagerly agreed, Beikadt crept back to the village and silently killed every one of his people as they slept.

Covered in gore, Beikadt moved through the kaer as if in a trance. He could think only of the silver and the wondrous new life of adventure that he and Terrin would share. Terrin was waiting for him outside the chamber where the silver was kept, and the two of them smiled at each other as if they had done a hero's deed. Then Beikadt said the words to open the chamber's magical seals. With a rush of air and a puff of dust, the door opened just enough to let the two of them walk inside.

Silver coins lay everywhere, covered with dust. The trolls had also put other treasures in the chamber for safekeeping, including a beautiful silver mirror. Beikadt saw himself in it, and came out of his trance. His face was spattered with blood, and his eyes gleamed with the light of madness. At the sight of what sat on a heap of silver behind him, Beikadt's eyes nearly sprang from his head. With a hungry grin, Terrin's skin peeled back to reveal the Horror beneath. As Beikadt reeled with the knowledge of the evil he had done, the Horror watched him and laughed.

The Horror's laughter roused the one troll left alive, a strong young warrior Named Eyebright. Despite the pain of a terrible gut wound, Eyebright struggled to the doorway of the treasure room and saw the Horror within. Eyebright summoned all his strength and began to push the door shut. The effort turned the world black around him and made the blood flow faster from his wound, but he did not falter. Beikadt screamed and turned to stop him, but too late. Eyebright slammed the door shut and gasped out the words to seal the treasure room with Beikadt, the Horror, and all the silver inside—save a single coin that had rolled out onto the floor of the kaer.

As Eyebright listened to Beikadt's despairing screams, he clutched the coin in one bloody hand. In the depths of his anguish for his slaughtered kin, Eyebright Named the piece of silver the Bloody Coin. From that day to this, the coin oozes small drops of blood whenever it is touched by those who have had dealings with Horrors.

THE BRAVERY OF NELSEN LONG-EARS

Every ork child can recite the bands of Herok's Lancers. First came Herok's Pride, led by Herok Shatterbone the First; next came Susano's Scorchers, led by Herok's sister, Susano; third came Kandor's Heroes, led by Herok's brother, Kandor; and last came Nelsen's Falcons, led by Nelsen Long-Ears.

Nelsen Long-Ears was a foundling, sent to Herok's mother by the Passion Garlen, who takes pity on the weak. And weak poor Nelsen surely was. When Herok's mother found him on the shores of Lake Ban, he was naked and bawling, frightened of everything that moved. He was thin and pale, with no flesh on his little bones to speak of and not even the stubs of tusks that might grow into something respectable. He had a long, narrow, ugly face, and long, narrow ugly ears. Still, Herok's mother had a kind heart, and she took the shivering baby home to raise as her own child.

Nelsen's foster mother fed him well, but he never grew as big and strong as any of her other children. He grew taller and put a little meat on his bones, but remained far too thin for a proper ork. And he stayed just as ugly as he had ever been and as fearful of everything around him. He had more of one thing, however, than his foster brothers

and sister: intelligence. All of them were bright enough, but Nelsen was the cleverest of all. Herok's mother loved her strange, small, weak, awkward, clever foundling. In fact, Nelsen soon became his mother's favorite.

When Herok Shatterbone (the first of that Name) came of age, the Therans (excuse me while I spit) had just returned to Barsaive, and the dwarfs of Throal were calling for all Name-givers to fight with them against the Theran dogs. Herok wanted to fight the Therans, but he knew that the best he could offer was his own sword. And one sword, however bravely wielded, was not much to set against the evil people who had enslaved the orks and all Barsaive. Herok wanted to do more, but could not think what. So Herok went to Nelsen and asked his advice. Now Nelsen was clever, but he was not brave. He hated the Therans as much as anybody, but he did not want to fight them. He wanted the Therans to go away, so that he could spend all his days quietly at home with his foster mother. Nelsen thought and thought about how to help Herok, and at last an idea came to him that would not only help his foster brother, but would let Nelsen stay home as his mother's only comfort. Nelsen Long-Ears suggested that Herok create a cavalry and Name it Herok's Lancers, with one division each for Herok, their brother Kandor, and their sister Susano.

Well, Herok liked Nelsen's idea so much that when he talked the tribe into it, he suggested that they add a fourth division for Nelsen. After all, Nelsen had come up with the idea. If not for him, there would be no ork cavalry called Herok's Lancers! It seemed only fair to include Nelsen and to give him a chance to win honor and glory in battle. To do anything less would have insulted Herok's foster brother, and that Herok refused to do. So Herok went about the business of forming four divisions of the Lancers, while the drums of war beat louder and louder.

At last, when everything was ready for the new cavalry to march to Throal and fight the Therans, Herok went to Nelsen and revealed his wonderful surprise—Nelsen would lead an entire division of Herok's Lancers into glorious combat! Well, Nelsen was surprised, all right—but he was nowhere near as delighted and grateful as Herok had thought he would be. Poor Nelsen was terrified. He cringed and cried and claimed he would die of fright even before he reached the gates of Throal. But Herok clapped him on the shoulder and said kindly, "We all feel a little fear before riding out to war. Don't worry, little brother—Thystonius will give you a brave heart."

Then Herok rode off to lead his cavalrymen in maneuvers, leaving Nelsen crying in his tent. Herok's mother heard Nelsen sobbing and asked him what troubled him. Nelsen clung to her like a baby and cried harder, saying that he was afraid to go to war. Now Herok's mother was sorry to see her beloved foster son so upset, and she dearly wished that he could somehow show courage to match his cleverness. She thought for a moment, then said to Nelsen, "Wait here until I return."

Herok's mother went to the bird-house, where all the groak birds lived and laid their tasty eggs for the tribe. She picked up the largest one with the most brilliant purple-black feathers, and plucked a single feather from its back. Then she took the feather to Nelsen and said, "I have a gift for you, my son. This feather is a magical treasure; whoever holds it can come to no harm on the battlefield. In the years before the Scourge, my forebears wore this feather into combat, and they all died of old age, snug and warm in their own beds. I was saving this treasure for Herok because he is my eldest child, but because you are my favorite son, I will give it to you."

And she put the groak feather in his hand. When the cavalry rode off toward Throal the next day, Nelsen wore the feather in his helmet. All during the ride to Throal, whenever Nelsen thought of the battles to come and felt afraid, he looked at the feather and remembered what his foster mother had told him.

Well, Herok's Lancers reached the gates of Throal less than a day before the Therans attacked. The battle was bloody and terrible, and many a good Barsaivian lost his life. The first, brutal clash of armies frightened Nelsen so badly that he could only sit on his thundra beast as if paralyzed, too terrified even to move out of harm's way. Two arrows from a Theran volley flew toward him, and Nelsen closed his eyes and waited for them to pierce him. When nothing happened, he opened his eyes and saw that the arrows had sunk deep into the ground an inch from his mount's feet. Then Nelsen believed that his foster mother had truly given him magical protection, and he cast his fear away like a threadbare cloak. He led a daring charge onto the field, striking out boldly against every foe in his path. And the warriors of his division followed him, amazed that Nelsen the coward had found a lion's heart at last.

All that day the cavalry fought, none harder or braver than Nelsen Long-Ears. The soldiers of Barsaive died by the hundreds—but the soldiers of Thera died by the thousands. Through it all, the magic feather waved like a banner in Nelsen's helmet, and no weapon touched him.

How Thystonius Gave Us His Spear

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Long ago, before the Scourge ravaged our land, a fierce war raged across all of Barsaive. Inspired by greed and treachery, it engulfed every city, town and village—including the hamlet of Torbant in the foothills of the Delaris Mountains. Now the orks of Torbant were farmers and miners; they worked hard and lived well, but could not boast of riches or power. They had only the fruits of their labor: sturdy houses, plentiful food, strong and healthy children, and the everyday joys of life. Of such things was their wealth made, and so they remained untouched by the Orichalcum Wars.

Then one day a band of human soldiers, threescore or better and hardened by constant strife, came to the village of Torbant and demanded food, supplies, and money. Even worse, they demanded Torbant's children to be their slaves and Torbant's young women for their entertainment. They swore that unless their demands were met by morning, they would level the village, taking what they wanted and killing every living thing that remained.

The village elders despaired. To make their children slaves and their women chattel was an evil they could not face. Yet they could not fight off the well-armed and armored marauders with farming tools and hunting bows. All night they debated, and after several hours they decided to surrender to the intruders' demands in the hope that those things would be enough. No sooner had the elders declared this, than one voice rose against them—the voice of Kourba, an aging warrior and questor of Thystonius.

Kourba stood before the council, dressed in full armor with an axe in one hand and a sword in the other. "Have none of you an ork's true heart, that you talk of giving in?" she said to the elders. "Give me a chance to resist our enemies. Even if I fall, I will punish their greed before I die. I will make them pay in blood—or at least sell our lives for a price dearer than meat and coin. I beg you, let me fight them!" And the elders, hearing her brave words, felt fear drop away from them for an instant, and in that moment they agreed to let Kourba do what she could.

At dawn, the entire village went with Kourba to the marauders' camp. She bellowed her challenge and rushed at them. Four men died before they could draw weapons, but all too soon the humans surrounded Kourba. One of them struck a blow that shattered the haft of her axe, and the others drew closer, scenting victory. Kourba raised her sword, prepared to welcome Death if only she could slay her enemies.

As Kourba struck a mighty blow, a second ork leaped into the fray. He stood ten feet tall, dressed in gleaming red armor, and he carried a mighty spear with a tip of the strongest iron. His unexpected charge threw confusion and fear into the marauders, allowing Kourba to slip free from their deadly ring of blades. Back to back, the two orks fought until their weapons were caked with blood, until their backs and shoulders burned with exhaustion, until their legs could scarcely hold them upright. As the sun crawled from east to west they fought, ceasing only when no foe remained alive.

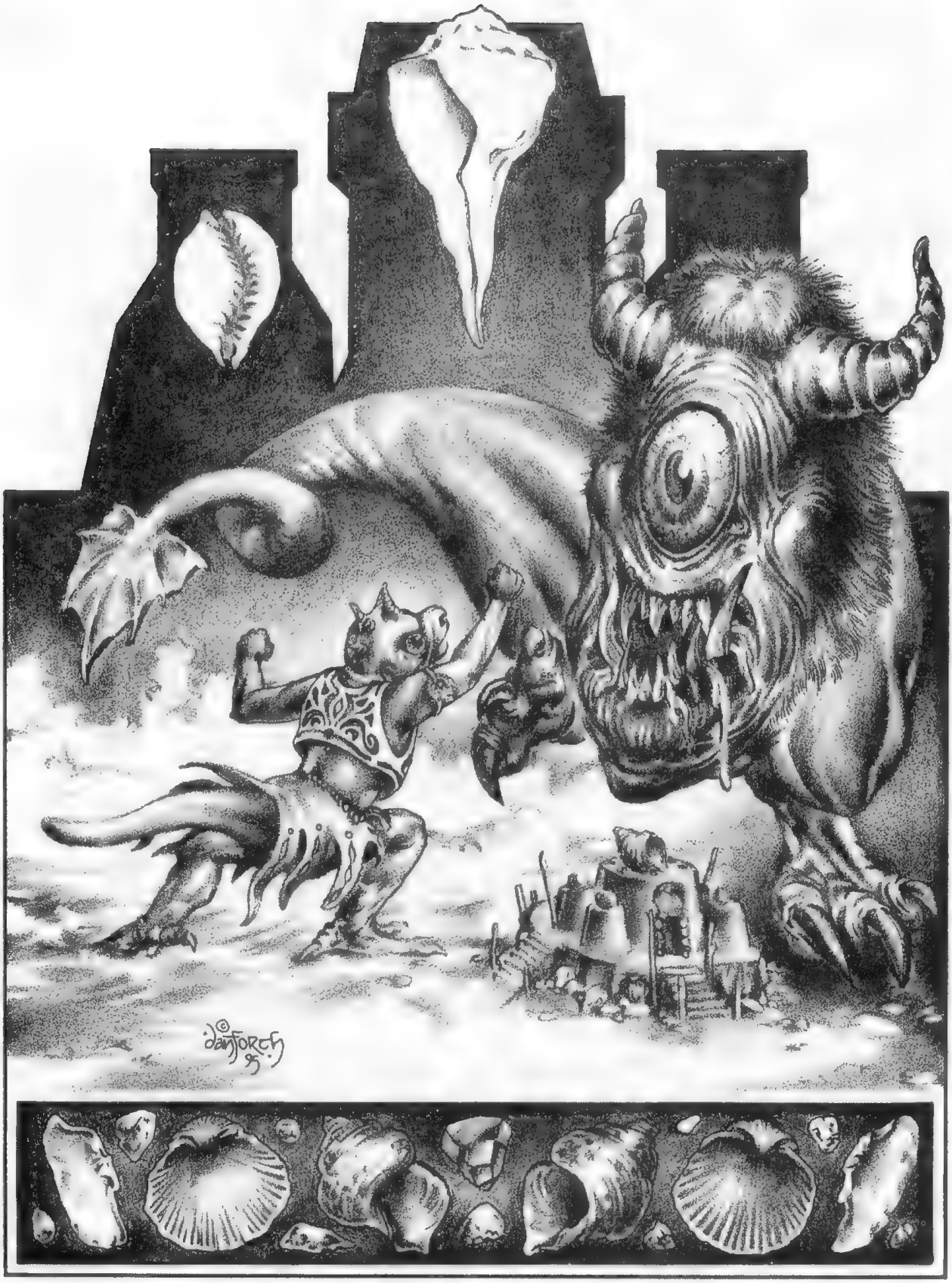
That night, the people of Torbant held a feast to honor Kourba and the mysterious warrior. The two of them sat in the place of honor, and the people gave them the choicest morsels of food and sang songs of their courage. As the last of the singing died away, Kourba turned to the giant sitting beside her. "I owe you my life," she said. "Tell me your name, that I may honor you with a toast."

"You have already honored me, my daughter," he answered, his booming voice echoing through the hall. All fell silent at the sound, and Kourba's heart told her that she looked upon the Passion Thystonius.

"I could not let such a faithful servant die at the hands of unworthy foes," Thystonius said. "Today you have shown the world true courage. Your willingness to spend every drop of your blood rather than see a single ork enslaved has greatly honored me."

Then Thystonius lifted his iron-tipped spear and gave it to Kourba. "This is for you, for your children and your people. May it always serve those who struggle, even in the face of almost-certain defeat." So saying, the Passion vanished.

Kourba died from her wounds three days later, but the spear of Thystonius has never left ork hands.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BABY, BABY, ANOINTED IN SAND

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On a beautiful day in late summer, not long after the Great Emergence from the kaers, a t'skrang chaida and two hatchlings went down to a rocky beach at the edge of the Serpent River to play in the sand. The sun shone warm and the strong wind from the south whistled along the river, bouncing off the water onto the beach and sending leaves and bits of dried river plants tumbling along the shore.

The youngest child and her chaida, sheltered from the wind amid a group of boulders on the beach, were building a sand castle together. They dug down to where the sand felt wet; then they scooped up great handfuls, piled them on the dry sand and patted the wet earth flat to make the castle's base. Around the edge of the square of wet sand, the hatchling carefully arranged shells and rocks, making a pattern pleasing to its eye.

All this while, the older child wandered the beach at will. Now the hatchling called to the chaida from out of sight. The chaida told the youngest one, "Stay here and build our sand castle. I will be right back." Then she went in search of the older child. The youngest child watched as the chaida disappeared around one of the gigantic rocks. For a moment, all was silent. Then the child heard a scream, and its heart caught in its throat. The chaida came back into sight, stumbling backward away from something, carrying the older child. Chaida and child fell, then struggled up and staggered toward the river's edge, crying, begging, trying to reach the water. In their wake followed a Horror, its aspect so fearful that terror drove all the breath from the little t'skrang's body.

The wind blew harder, throwing sand into the little t'skrang's face. The child put an arm over its eyes until the wind died down. When the hatchling opened its eyes again, it saw that the chaida had fallen to her knees and was holding the older child behind her. The chaida tried to push the child toward the river, but the older hatchling was too frightened to leave the chaida's side.

The little t'skrang watched the Horror tear apart and devour them both. It took them a long time to die. Even as the little hatchling watched in shock, its hands moved of their own accord. Using a shovel and bucket, the hatchling continued to build the sand castle. And as the hatchling built the castle, it seemed to take on a purpose, a Name. The little t'skrang made the walls straight and solid, stitched a pattern of tiny shells across the ramparts, traced green lines in the brown sand with pieces of water plants. The main tower grew and grew as the child built it higher and higher, until the castle stood nearly as tall as the hatchling did.

The Horror turned its evil gaze on the youngest child just as the hatchling finished the main tower. The Horror loomed over the t'skrang, delighting in the child's sweetness and innocence, soon to be defiled. Then the child looked up at the Horror, anger written across the baby face. The child said one word: "No." In that word was all the powerful magic of the child's innocent rage. The Horror screamed, and its skin collapsed like an empty husk as the magic of the sand castle entrapped it.

To this day, the sand castle stands, untouched by the rages of the most violent storms. No one dares go near it, but to this day we honor its builder by sprinkling every child with sand at birth to invoke the power with which that little hatchling banished a Horror.

Some days and nights, when the wind blows across Sand Castle Beach as it did on that fateful day, you can hear the wailing of a small child ... or is it the cry of a captured Horror?

VALVIDIUS, KING OF THIEVES

You've never heard that expression before—to pull a Valvidius? You've not spent much time in Kratas, have you? A Valvidius is a glorious swindle—but also one that could leave you dead because you made the wrong folk angry. I'll tell you the tale, and then you'll understand. (Buy me a cup of ale first, friend—storytelling's thirsty work.)

It all happened centuries before the Scourge, of course. Valvidius was a dwarf thief, and even his bitterest rivals called him the greatest thief of all time. For it was Valvidius who stole the Three Rings of Harpfast from under the noses of a thousand guardsmen; and it was Valvidius who stole the Egg of Lost Desire from the private treasure vaults of Barsaive's first Theran Overgovernor. Yes, Valvidius was truly a great thief, and he knew it. But by the time he reached middle age, he'd pulled off so many wondrous exploits with so little difficulty that he was beginning to get bored. Even the thought of robbing the Theran treasury at Parlainth left him cold—it wasn't worth his talents. (Lucky for the Theran rats in Parlainth, that's all I can say.) Valvidius racked his brains for some piece of thieving that would give him a real challenge, and finally he came up with a truly fantastic swindle.

On one dark night, hidden from all eyes in his private study, Valvidius scribbled a piece of verse on a parchment scroll. When the ink was dry, he dipped the parchment in tea to make it look weathered, then frayed the edges and folded it to make cracks in the middle. When he was finished with the scroll, he took a common metal crown—the kind metalsmiths usually begin with to make duplicates of precious treasures—and painted it all over with some gold leaf he'd stolen from the famous Banchus Jewel House. Then he hid the crown and the scroll in his traveling bag beneath a couple of dirty jerkins and went to bed. The next day, he went off to the capital city of Landis, letting it be known that he expected rich pickings.

About a month later, he came back to Kratas in a state of high excitement. Knowing the word would spread through the Thieves' City faster than fire in a dry hayfield, Valvidius went to the Heart's Ease Tavern and announced that he'd found an ancient scroll that spoke of a sure way to win the Passion Vestrial's favor. (In those days, of course, Vestrial was sane, and most thieves had a soft spot for the trickster Passion.) Valvidius read the scroll out loud to all assembled: it said that to earn Vestrial's undying love, all the greatest thieves in Barsaive must meet and crown a King of Thieves. In the next year, everyone who wanted to be king must perform their most audacious thefts and then gather in the old fortress of Florque—near Kratas—to show off their booty in a grand Thieves' Festival. The best theft would win the crown of the Thief King.

So all the thieves went off in search of treasures to steal, for each one wanted to be the Thief King. And while they were gone, Valvidius went to their guards and servants and retainers. He spoke soft words to them and passed out gold and silver here, there, and everywhere. When the year was almost up, Valvidius took the crown he'd made and went to Florque to wait for his fellow thieves.

The Thieves' Festival was a rousing success. The thieves of Barsaive showed off precious objects by the dozens: magical javelins from Thera, rare orichalcum coins bearing the faces of kings dead for centuries, the diary of the great dragon Usun, and many other wonders that few Name-givers had ever looked upon. Of course, each thief had brought bodyguards and retainers to protect what he'd brought. They all wanted to be king, and not one of them was taking the slightest chance of having his treasure stolen from him. The thieves and their bodyguards talked and argued endlessly over which theft deserved the crowning glory, until Valvidius mounted the great stone dais in the middle of Florque's Great Hall.

Into the sudden silence, he said, "Now comes the time to crown the greatest thief of all. Look with favor upon me, O Vestrial!"

And he pulled a beautiful golden crown from behind his back and placed it on his own head. The other thieves, furious, called to their bodyguards to fight, but the bodyguards all fell to their knees and hailed Valvidius, King of Thieves! Then they took the precious things that the other thieves had stolen and placed them in a huge pile at Valvidius' feet. Valvidius had pulled off the greatest theft of all time—he had stolen the loyalty of the master thieves' henchmen, along with all the booty his rivals had stolen from others.

For many years Valvidius ruled Kratas from his stronghold in Florque, and those who served him prospered. Then one dark night, when Valvidius was in his treasure vault savoring the fruits of his long-ago victory, the stone walls grew bright with a strangely colored, shimmering light. A strong wind began to blow through the windowless treasury. Valvidius stood firm, clutching his crown to his chest and muttering, "Never. I will never leave my treasures!" The wind blew harder, and the light grew blinding. A look of fear crossed Valvidius' face, and he cried out, "Vestrial! I meant it as a jest. I thought only to please you!"

"Betrayal does not please me," said a voice that shook the earth. "You have stolen that which you had no right to steal—the sworn word of common men. There is only one punishment for such effrontery." With a sound like a thousand thunderclaps, the light exploded—then fell a terrible silence.

The next day, Valvidius' vaults stood empty. No one could find a trace of the wonderful treasures, the coffers full of coin, or any trace of Valvidius himself—save for his crown, bent and half-melted into a long oval shape. Funny thing, though—the tin crown Valvidius had gilded to fool people had turned to real, solid gold. They say the Crown of Thieves still exists, and that it's worth several fortunes. But no one knows where it is, of course. Me, I don't know what to believe. I've shared a flagon of ale with plenty of folk who've gone looking for it. But I've not seen any of them come back …

THE SHACKLED FEET OF FRIENDSHIP

In the days before the Scourge, when the Therans ruled Barsaive with an iron fist, our ancestor Tchi traveled far down the Serpent River in search of new villages with which to trade, despite the warnings of some elders of our foundation who advised her against a journey so deep into unknown lands. Her trading prospered, and soon she began the long voyage home again; but scarcely a day after setting sail she fell into the hands of slavers. Tchi fought bravely, but the slavers overwhelmed her. They took all her goods as plunder and branded her with the iron mark of ownership.

When Tchi regained her senses, she saw iron bands around her ankles and felt burning agony in one foot. Her captors had shackled her to a human woman. Through her own foot and the human's, the slavers had driven an iron pin, piercing the flesh behind their ankle bones so that they could scarcely walk. Tchi spoke to the woman, but the woman would only say that her Name was Mara.

Legends of Earthdawn • The Shackled Feet of Friendship

Tchi and Mara spent many weeks shackled together, forced by the slavers to walk across Barsaive. Because of the shackle, they could only move without agony by leaning on each other so that they would put no weight upon their shackled legs. As they made their long, slow march toward the city of Vivane, Tchi and Mara shared their fear and pain and grew from strangers into the dearest of friends.

In Vivane, their captors sold them to Theran slavers. The Therans chained the two women to a wall in a dark, dank dungeon beneath the stables of an inn where slavers trading in town or nearby would often go for a meal or a few nights' lodging. The basement had been specially made to store the Name-givers bought and sold; it had a heavy wooden door locked with a thick iron bolt, and large metal rings set into the stone walls to which slaves were bound. It was cold, and it stank of manure and other rotting things. Even the hay in the stable above was rotten and fetid; the owners of the inn replaced it only when the stench grew so strong that paying customers began to notice it above the smell of horses. As the horses moved around above Mara and Tchi, bits of hay, mud, and manure fell on them through the cracks in the stable floor.

Mara and Tchi crouched together in misery. As they clung to each other for warmth, they whispered of what they would do if they saw a chance to escape. Though all true hope of such a chance had faded from their minds, it eased their pain a little to think of killing their evil masters and running free into the hills.

One day, as Tchi spun a tale of returning in triumph to the banks of the Serpent, a small knife used to clean horses' hooves fell through a crack in the ceiling and landed near the two slaves. Mara and Tchi looked first at the knife, then at each other. As one, they reached for the tiny blade. For hours they worked, first trying to break the lock on their chains, then trying to pry the ring out of the wall, then trying to force the shackles off their legs. Finally, exhausted and desperate, Mara jabbed hard at one iron band. The knife slipped off the metal and tore into her ankle. Mara screamed, and the sound of her own voice drove her into a frenzy of anger and pain. Again and again, she cut at her bleeding foot. Tchi cried out for her to stop, but then saw in Mara's madness a clear way of escape—the only way left to them. As the knife cleaved through Mara's muscle and bone, Tchi tore a strip of leather from her jerkin and tied it around her friend's ankle to staunch the bleeding. Then Tchi took the knife, and Mara held her as Tchi began to cut off her own foot. Leaning on each other, they escaped into the night.

They walked for two days, holding each other up whenever either faltered. Scavenging for food and water, constantly watching for pursuers, they traveled north toward the mountains. Once, as they huddled in an ice-cold stream behind a few sheltering bushes, the slavers passed within feet of where they hid. As they struggled through the mountain passes, Mara caught a fever; and Tchi, rather than leave her friend behind, tended Mara lovingly and saved her from Death's embrace. And all the while the slavers hunted them, wild beasts beset them, and no safe haven from the Scourge awaited them, for they were both too far from home. All they had was each other.

It is said that they hid in the mountains for weeks before finding a kaer whose people welcomed them. Until their deaths, these two women remained the closest of friends, living together and helping one another with every daily task. No one else could understand the pain they had shared, or their love and need for each other.

When the Scourge ended hundreds of years later, one of our foundation discovered the severed feet of Tchi and Mara, still bound by the shackles and strangely well-preserved. As long as friendship and trust remain in the world, the feet will not decay.

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THE QUESTOR AND THE MAGICIAN

Once there was a brother, a great questor of Astendar, and a sister, a wielder of powerful magic. The brother was Named Eaconn; the sister, Tassia. Together with their allies Braltoth the Rock, Ambaras the Wave, and the Countess of Nevermore, they vanquished many Horrors and wicked Name-givers. They overturned the Plateau of Umnor to crush the Choir of Madness. They shattered the Tower of False Regrets. They delved deep into the Chasm of a Thousand Throats and came back alive. And in all these and other mighty deeds, Tassia and Eaconn worked together like hand and glove, like lock and key, like river and riverbed.

But as they celebrated each victory in their keep in forgotten Seremor, they always disagreed about which powers were superior—those bestowed by the Passions, or those discovered through Name-giver magic alone. No matter what the talk over ale and food, whatever Eaconn said Tassia would dispute. And when Tassia voiced an opinion, Eaconn contradicted it. On the rare occasions when one convinced the other, the victor would switch positions merely to continue the debate. One day, either Tassia or Eaconn—no one remembers which—proposed a wager to settle the question. To test which powers were superior, the questor and the magician agreed that each would forge a bell of purest metal. The other members of their legendary adventuring party would judge the contest, and whoever produced the bell with the most beautiful tone would be the victor.

So Eaconn and Tassia retreated to their own private workshops, while their friends pursued other matters. A month later, the three judges returned to the keep at Seremor, only to discover that neither the questor nor the magician had emerged from their sequester. After another month the three returned again, but Eaconn and Tassia still refused to come out. The three returned a third time, a year later, and still the questor and the magician had not finished their work. The three adventurers pleaded with Eaconn and Tassia to abandon their wager, but they would not, and so the legendary friends parted ways.

Seven years later, Braltoth the Rock was slain by a child bearing a silver tray, as had been prophesied years ago by Braltoth's mother. Thirteen years later, the Countess of Nevermore was caught in a spirit maze, and her body withered and died. And thirteen years after that, Ambaras the Wave was turned to sand by the Barsaive Snake and scattered by the winds.

Another twenty years later, on a bright Raquas morning, Eaconn and Tassia emerged simultaneously from their workshops in the keep. Aged and crippled both, they came together, each to admit defeat—for each had a fine-looking bell that made no sound.

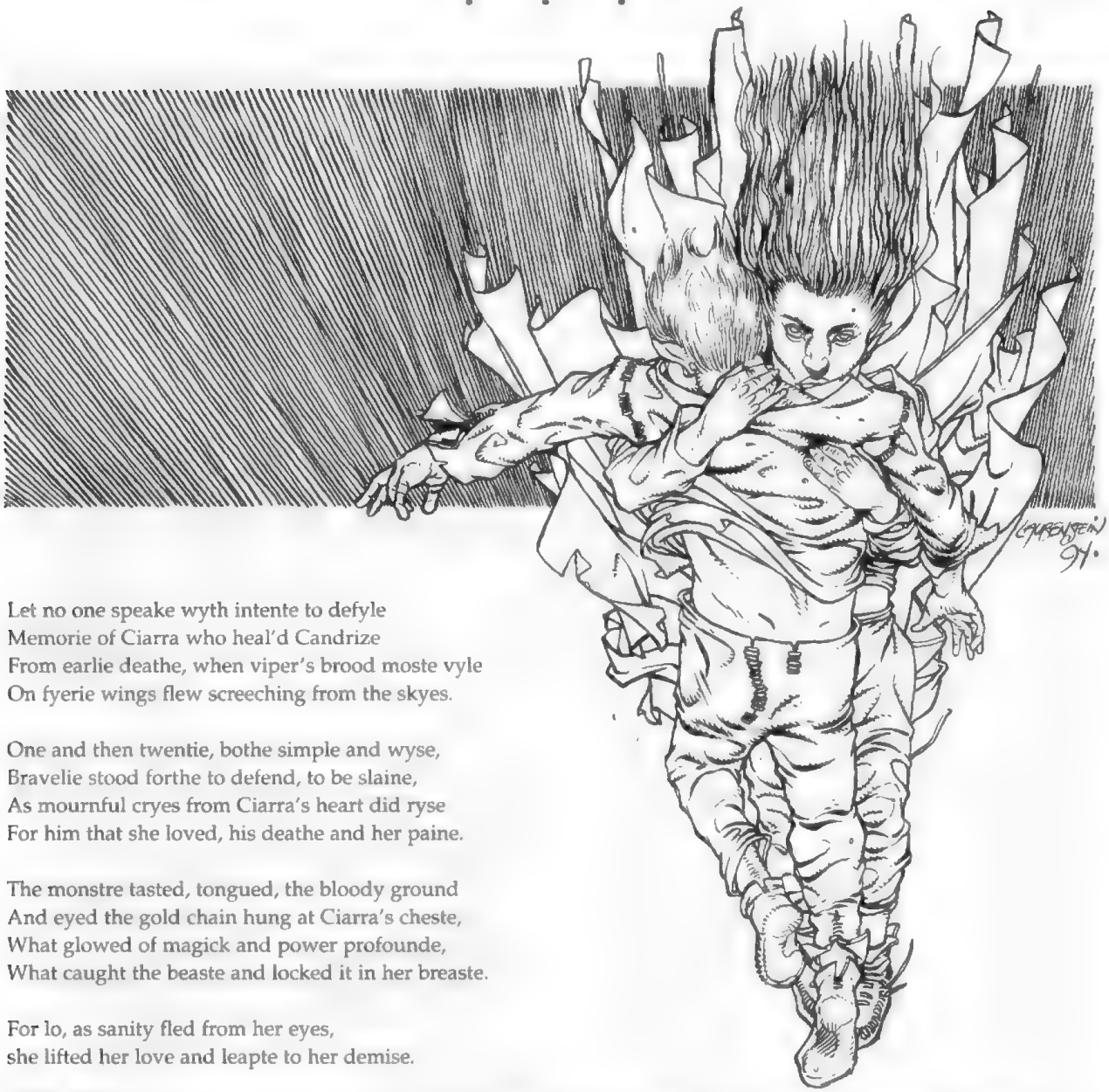
"We have wasted our lives on a foolish wager," Eaconn said. "And we have lost many years we could have spent with our great companions, who are now forever lost to us."

"Though I find the irony of it painful, I am forced to agree, my brother," said Tassia.

Carelessly, they threw the bells down onto the floor. The bells rolled together and touched. To the surprise of both brother and sister, the two bells became one, making the most lovely peal heard before or since. The sound of the bell rejuvenated the questor and the magician, and brought their comrades back to life from their various graves. Surprised to be alive, at Seremor and at the height of their powers, Braltoth, Ambaras and the Countess of Nevermore quickly pronounced the bell contest a draw. Reunited in a miraculous second youth, the five adventurers accomplished many more heroic exploits.

Realizing, however, that their bell was too beautiful and powerful to be hung from any tower, Eaconn and Tassia split it in two and hid its pieces. It is said that miracles will happen when the bell rings again.

CIARRA SHY-RU



Let no one speake wyth intente to defyle
Memorie of Ciarra who heal'd Candrize
From earlie deathe, when viper's brood moste vyle
On fyerie wings flew screeching from the skyes.

One and then twentie, bothe simple and wyse,
Bravelie stood forthe to defend, to be slaine,
As mournful cryes from Ciarra's heart did ryse
For him that she loved, his deathe and her paine.

The monstre tasted, tongued, the bloody ground
And eyed the gold chain hung at Ciarra's cheste,
What glowed of magick and power profounde,
What caught the beaste and locked it in her breaste.

For lo, as sanity fled from her eyes,
she lifted her love and leapte to her demise.

This is the tale of Ciarra Shy-Ru, who teaches us the true meaning of courage. Long ago did Candrize live, a village built on a high ledge on the side of Mount Tyrock. Tall were its houses and every building within it, and deep was the crevasse below. Only by mounting the steep, winding path up the mountain's flank could any reach Candrize. And long ago did Ciarra Shy-Ru live, Candrize's truest daughter.

Ciarra was the child of Ciar'h Rhan, respected Elder of Candrize. From her earliest days, Ciarra learned the ways of a leader, for all knew that she must lead Candrize upon her father's death. For many a long year had Ciar'h Rhan led the people, and he commanded all their respect and love—partly for his own good

qualities, and partly because of the Chain of Capturing. Since the days of Ciar'h Rhan's great-grandsire, who had made the magical chain, all the leaders of Candrize wore it to help hold the people together against fear in the face of the coming Scourge. And so, too, would Ciarra Shy-Ru wear it in her time.

Now Ciarra had grown from child to young woman, and had plighted her troth to Marat Bhen, a fine strong man with a clear eye and a noble heart. All the village loved them both, and Ciarra's thoughts dwelled dreamily on the children she would bear as she helped the village folk make the last day's preparations to enter their kaer. All the people of Candrize talked of the coming marriage, the first to be celebrated in their new home under the earth. And all felt relieved (though none spoke of it) that they would surely escape the ravages of the Horrors. At the end of that very day, they would enter their kaer and seal themselves away from the outside world. After that was done, they need fear nothing anymore.

The villagers bustled about, carrying crates, barrels, and trunks into the cavern that they had made their kaer. They packed up their possessions and brought them down the narrow path to the kaer entrance, a crack in the cliff wall. Artisans made the last, finishing touches to the symbols of protection around the doorway, and the village elementalist spoke softly to the clumps of ivy that he would cause to grow over the sealed doorway to hide it. The people were eager to enter their kaer, built as it was within the cave of crystal that they had long held sacred. The folk whispered to each other that the crystals of Candrize held special magical powers, for did not shards of these same crystals hang from their own Elder's magic chain? With so much magic to protect them, how could the people help but survive through the Long Darkness?

As the sun moved farther westward toward its resting place, Ciarra and Marat Bhen rested from their labors on a sun-warmed rock and talked quietly of the house they would share. A vast shadow fell across the rock, blotting out the light. Someone screamed, and Ciarra looked up to see a monster before them.

The Horror hovered between Candrize and the sun. Three snake heads twisted and hissed atop the disfigured body of a man. It descended slowly toward them, its huge wings spread wide. The sun shone suddenly through the wings, nearly blinding the brave souls who rushed toward it with weapons in their hands: a scythe, a haying hook, an axe. Ciar'h Rhan led Candrize's bold defenders, his white hair shining in the sun like a banner of war. The Chain of Capturing gleamed around his neck. As the fighters passed by, Marat Bhen slipped off the rock and joined them.

Many men and women fell that day. Their blood poured from the cliff like a waterfall. One of the Horror's heads ripped Marat Bhen's throat out. A single blow from the Horror's clawed hand unseamed Ciar'h Rhan from the nave to the chops and flung his corpse high over the heads of those who watched in dread. As the fighters died with anguished screams and shouts, mothers grabbed their children and ran for the kaer. The Horror pursued them, its snake heads dripping gore.

In a daze, Ciarra knelt by her father's body and drew the Chain over his head. Slowly she placed it around her neck, then stood and advanced toward the Horror. She carried no weapon; she had no plan of action. All that filled her mind was shock and grief, and a burning rage at the thing that had slain both father and lover before her eyes.

Ciarra stepped in front of the Horror. It ceased its pursuit and gazed at her. Ciarra walked slowly toward the monster, her eyes open and unblinking. With every step, her rage and anguish grew. Then a spark of fire flew between the Chain and the Horror, and the abomination collapsed to the ground. The surviving village folk watched in silence. Then, when the Horror remained unmoving, they began to cheer and cry and kiss each other.

Ciarra knelt beside Marat Bhen, gently caressing his bloody cheek. Taking him in her arms, she lifted him up and faced her people. She looked upon them without speaking for several moments, making them fall silent. For her eyes seemed to flicker as they watched—now the eyes of Ciarra Shy-Ru, now the eyes of the Horror. As her eyes once again became those of Ciarra Shy-Ru, she turned away and leaped off the edge of the cliff.

The dwarfs of Candrize went immediately into the kaer and sealed it shut, and in the earth's embrace they mourned their dead. They dared not delay to recover Ciarra's body, lest some other fearful calamity befall them. To this day, it is said that the bones of Ciarra Shy-Ru and Marat Bhen, and the Chain of Capturing, lie somewhere at the bottom of the great crevasse.

PARLIAMENT OF MERMAIDS

In the early days, when the t'skrang first swam the Serpent River, we shared the Great Water with a race of strange creatures called mermaids. The mermaids caused us many troubles, but not because mermaids are evil or terrible, like Horrors or Theran slavers. It is true the elves feared them, for sometimes they took an elf child and made it a mermaid. But we had no fear of the mermaids, because they were like us. They talked and sang and told stories, they built houses to live in, they loved their children and wanted peace with their neighbors. Just because you mean well, though, doesn't make you a good neighbor—and the mermaids were not. They thought they were more beautiful to behold than a fine sunrise, that their jokes were cleverer than any others, that their voices were a greater blessing to hear than the sound of a good sailing wind.

Because they believed that they could do no wrong, they did not understand why we did not love them. They made friends with the fish we ate, warning the fish away from our boats so that we could catch no dinner.

They frolicked and played in the river without paying any attention to where our boats were going, and often tipped over our vessels—sometimes by accident, sometimes on purpose. (Now, these things happened long before Upandal helped us discover the secret of the fire engine, so the boats we used in those days were flimsy and easy to tip over compared to the ones your mothers and fathers use today.) And so when the mermaids tipped over our boats, we would lose our catches. Also, because the mermaids were made of elemental water, they could slip under the doors of our houses and make themselves at home any time they wanted to. And when their pranks and doings made us angry, the mermaids would not apologize. Instead, they laughed at us, because they thought the wrongs they did us were funny.

One day, we t'skrang had simply had enough. Determined to make the mermaids stop their foolishness and leave us alone, wise Rossaruss and her daring mate, T'Chakru, went to the Parliament of the mermaids to plead our case. The Parliament was to the mermaids what our aropagoi are to us, though their Parliament was loud and disorderly compared to the way we t'skrang run our affairs. The Parliament met in a huge palace underwater, a building of great grandeur but little use. Its halls twisted and turned and led to nothing. Its rooms were of strange shapes that confused the eye. Its staircases led nowhere, and one could not see out of many of its windows. And the only room in the whole grand, foolish place that anyone ever used for anything was the Great Argument Hall, where the mermaids gathered to quarrel with each other and play practical jokes on whoever happened to be present.

Rossaruss and T'Chakru swam to the Parliament and made their way to the Great Argument Hall, where Rossaruss spoke to the assembled mermaids. But the proud mermaids rebuffed her. They claimed that the Great River was theirs and said we should be honored to have them bursting into our homes and tipping over our boats. They then began to sing and play their lyres for Rossaruss, thinking that their performance would be sufficient payment to make up for their wrongs.

Now Rossaruss was very clever, and she knew that the mermaids would say these foolish things. As the mermaids played and sang, Rossaruss whispered to T'Chakru to study certain fish that attended the mermaids' Parliament. T'Chakru saw the fish and memorized their appearance—there was a fat bass with a pattern like a wheel on its left side, two carp with glowing green eyes, three pike with long fins like arms, and an eel as long as seven riverboats.

Bold, brave T'Chakru spent many a year hunting for these fish, until he had caught each and every one of them. Then he imprisoned them in underwater cages, hiding them well from all eyes. Soon afterward, the haughty mermaids called Rossaruss to their Parliament and demanded the return of their attendants. The bass was their Bailiff, they said. The two carp kept all their Thoughts and Memories. The three Pike were their chief Child-Stealers, and the eel was their representative to the Passions. Rossaruss refused to give the fish back, and the mermaids became so angry that they threatened to leave the Serpent River—and this world—unless Rossaruss gave in to their demands. This threat was exactly what Rossaruss had been waiting for. Politely but firmly, she refused the mermaids one last time and wished them a safe journey to the other world.

Now these words took the mermaids aback. They could not believe that Rossaruss would risk losing their delightful company. But the mermaids were too proud to take back what they had said, and so they made preparations to go to another world. Up until the very last moment, even as they stepped over the gate from this world to the new one they had chosen, the proud mermaids expected Rossaruss to relent, to promise to return the fish and beg them to stay. But Rossaruss merely bid them farewell, smiling all the while.

Ever since that time, the river has been free of mermaids. And if you ever find a cage in which a strange bass and eel swim with two carp and three pikes, leave them be—we don't want those pests to come back.

T'SELAS VRIIMON AND THE VRYKANOGEN

Sit by me, child, and I'll tell you the tale of T'Selas Vriimon and the Spirits of Shadow, those we call vrykanogen. Everyone knows about the Scourge, of course—even a youngling like you knows very well that man and dwarf and troll and elf and ork and even windling retreated underground to escape the Horrors that tore the world above to pieces. Even we t'skrang hid during that time, going into our Long Sleep rather than face the Horrors; for this enemy was so strong and so evil that not even the bravest heart could stand against them. But do you know of the great heroes of the time just after the Scourge ended, when we first began to wake and the other races first began to come out of their dark burrows? That time is the time of T'Selas Vriimon, a great swordmaster whose equal has yet to come again. T'Selas lived on the banks of the Serpent River, in a place that had been a great trading town before the Scourge. The swordmaster and his fellow t'skrang were

determined to make their town great again and help rebuild poor Barsaive by reviving the river trade. And so T'Selas Vriimon declared that he would take the first step. He would go to every village and town in that region of Barsaive and bring them word that the Scourge was over and the time had come to take up the threads of life again.

So T'Selas embarked on his great journey, spreading the news of the Scourge's end far and wide. Some kaers refused to listen, fearing that T'Selas might be a disguised Horror or other evil being. But most folk welcomed him with embraces and tears of joy. Often, the people asked him for news of kin from other kaers and rejoiced when T'Selas told them of relations he had found. He also fed the hunger of isolated villages for word of how the rest of Barsaive had fared during the Scourge. Because he did these things, T'Selas Vriimon was treated like a dear friend wherever he went.

Then one day, T'Selas traveled to a kaer whose people had treated him with the utmost kindness. The villagers had been rebuilding their homes above the ground, and the village elders had asked T'Selas to help them trade for needed supplies with their neighbors. To the swordmaster's great surprise and dismay, the folk of this village refused him hospitality on this visit. When he asked what he had done to offend them, they gave him no answer but told him roughly to move on. Rather than prolong a quarrel with people who had suffered so much so recently, T'Selas went on his way and soon put the villagers' rudeness out of his mind.

But when the swordmaster journeyed back the same way a few weeks later, he found that the rudeness had spread to other villages nearby. Indeed, the rudeness had grown to a festering anger, and when T'Selas spoke to the people of the first village, they threatened to do him harm. And so T'Selas once again politely left the folk alone. This time, however, he waited nearby and watched them.

T'Selas soon saw that no children played in the village streets, and no old folk sat dreaming in the sun. Their absence greatly disturbed the mighty t'skrang hero, and so he continued to watch. As the twilight drew closer, he saw people sneaking out of their half-built houses carrying bundles in their arms, which they dumped into the village well. No one's eyes met anyone else's, and no one spoke a single word. One by one, the people snuck to the well and threw their bundles into its inky depths. Curious, T'Selas prowled close enough to catch a glimpse of the bundles. The wrapping came loose on one of them, and T'Selas saw that it was a bundle of bones.

And T'Selas thought of the missing children and old ones, and he grew afraid. And as more and more people threw their little bony packages into the well, T'Selas was seized by a great, hot rage. He leaped from his hiding place and struck out at the villagers, howling in righteous fury. The villagers hissed like snakes and fled into the shadows. The swordmaster hunted these unnatural folk from house to house, stalked them even down the darkest tunnels and destroyed all he found. When he could find no more of the corrupted villagers, T'Selas made preparations for the proper burial of the children slaughtered by their parents, the aged killed by their own sons and daughters.

As he worked, T'Selas Vriimon heard the dry rasping of dead leaves and the scuttling of clawed feet on stone. He looked up and saw what had once been the people of the village, risen from the dead and revealed as vrykanogen. They walked in the skin of Name-givers, but their teeth were fangs and their nails were claws. And a darkness surrounded them, the darkness of a sealed grave.

T'Selas drew his sword just as the vrykanogen attacked. He fought with all the skill at his command, but the mighty hero was weary from his earlier labors. He killed many of the Horror-tainted villagers, slashing with his sword and breaking bones with the lash of his tail, but in the end the nightmare creatures overwhelmed him. He died bleeding from a thousand wounds, swinging his sword to his last breath. And the monsters feasted on his corpse.

THE KING WHO RULED THE PASSIONS

Once more the land of Thamos lay in peace.
Startled by a cruel and sudden eagle,
Queen Uurnolia fared North[1] in that year.
To Maxton was the jewel'd throne passed;
To him of wide girth, bright eye, but dim thought.
To Maxton was the young Releel betrothed:
She of quick laugh, swift heel, but brief life lived.

Came many Kings and Queens from lands afar
To hear Maxton and Releel pledge their vows.
Quoth Maxton at the bride feast, "I am Joy.
Thamos lies peaceful; in Releel's fair eyes
I drown. Such drowning ne'er tasted sweeter."
Quoth Releel in turn, "My gracious king,
Of all that you survey, you are the lord."

Then stood from humblest seat, far from the Throne,
In shabby robes where rainbow colors danced,
A laughing Questor of wild Vestrial.
The Questor spake: "Of much you may be lord.
Yet far above you ever stand the Passions."
Quoth Maxton, as the flame burned in his cheeks,
"No shabby jester shall so shame me here."

To kings and queens assembled, Maxton said,
"I know not of your realms; here, I rule all."
Fires of shame and rage in Maxton swelled
As Releel gazed upon him, puffed with pride.
To royal heralds Maxton gave decree:
All Questors were to bow to him or die.

First came the one who shamed him as he wed.
"Unsay your words," quoth Maxton, "lest you die."
The jester answered, "My words I'll withdraw;
Their truth, great King, not you nor I can alter."
Then Maxton said, "Your kind speaks
double-tongued!"
"All truths are double," quoth the jester, smiling.
And smiled he still as sharp blades pierced his heart.

Some questors gave their pride as poor tribute,
Bobbing shameless at their new lord's feet.
Some tied the Passions' words in twists and turns;
Once true to One, these served two masters false.
Others gave their lives as lesser price
Than to betray the Passions pledg'd to serve;
These bloodied the blades of Maxton's loyal men.

Maxton grew white of hair and short of tooth,
Releel's once-fragrant flower witheréd,
When o'er the Questors victory was declared.
Fierce, fearsome, king and queen exulted;
Until upon the inner palace door
A dozen knocks disturbed the air like thunder.

Quoth Maxton, "Who is't that would enter here?"
Spake one unseen, "Those who accept your rule."
Swung wide the door; twelve Passions stood beyond it.
Thystonius, warrior lord, cast down his weapon;
Lochost, the rebel, said, "Our cause is lost."
We bow to you, we call you Overlord."
And Vestrial, clown Vestrial, he smiled.

The Passions' fealty Maxton did accept;
He made them servants in his castle keep.
Gardens glorious did Jaspree grow,
Garments fabulous did Floranuus sew,
Cures miraculous did Garlen make,
Gold from empty air did Chorrolis take.

Lochost and Thystonius fought for sport
Upon a stage for Maxton and Releel;
A labyrinthine palace Dis design'd,
And proud Upandal built it up with ease.
Raggok to distant courts as envoy went;
In halls of justice did Mynbruje labor,
Weighing arguments of lesser men.

Astendar from his lute plucked songs of sorrow
As on mutton king and queen did sup;
And Vestrial, clown Vestrial, he smiled.
For on the day Maxton took Passions' service,
That very day his doom was promiséd;
His doom and that of his fair realm, proud Thamos.

Thystonius' blows and Lochost's went astray,
Felling the kingdom's finest warriors;
Raggok forged too-strong bonds with ally nations
So wily Maxton could not betray them.
Mynbruje's justice gave too much to many;
Not all Chorrolis' gold could pay the cost.
And Vestrial, clown Vestrial, he smiled.

Floranuus' robes enchanted every eye
That saw them; hypnotized, the people died,
For Garlen's healing could not restore them.
One by one, great Thamos lost its treasure—
The subjects of the prideful king and queen—
Until alone stood Maxton and Releel,
Wandering lost through echoing palace halls.

Conceived by Dis, too strange for mortal minds;
Built by Upandal, too strong to fall
Until Jaspree's wild garden choked its stones.
Then Astendar's sad songs rang too true;
King Maxton and Queen Releel were maddened,
Ruin'd Thamos by the Passions left abandoned.

And Vestrial, clown Vestrial, he smiled.
The lesson needs no poet to explain.
Of this sad tale, the meaning's all too plain.
Thamos is long dead, its beauties gone,
Yet still the words its dead folk speak ring strong.
Passions rule Name-givers, not the reverse;
This truth refus'd invites Vestrial's curse.

1. To "fare North" in ancient times meant ***to die.***

THE WAY OF THE BEASTS

When the world was young, there lived a troll Named Ysang. He was the strongest troll in his village and showed true *jik'harra*. He was fierce in battle, and gentler than a baby bird to those he loved. Above all things, Ysang loved to learn about the world. He flew airships far and wide to see everything there was to see.

One day, he flew his airship into the fierce mountain winds. The winds snapped the mast and the rudder, and Ysang could not steer. He climbed the broken mast to see if he could affix the sail elsewhere, but just then the wind struck hard at the ship. It bucked like a wild thundra beast, throwing him into the air, and Ysang began to fall.

The branches of a young pine broke his fall, and so he landed without hurt. But as soon as he looked around him, Ysang saw that he was in trouble. For he had landed in the mountains to the southeast of his moothome, in the lands claimed by scorchers. No sooner did he recognize this danger than he heard the tread of thundra beasts

below. A scorcher band was passing, and Ysang hid among the cool, green pine fronds. When the orks had gone, he climbed out of the tree and began the long walk toward home.

He walked for half a day through the bracken, uphill and down as the mountain trail led him. He did not stop to break his fast, lest the scorchers catch up with him. Around him, he saw only bracken and bare rock. No bushes grew to give him berries, nor trees to drop their fruit for him. His feet began to hurt and his belly to ache with hunger, but still he walked on under the bright, merciless sun. He looked up at the blue sky and saw an eagle soaring across it. Oh, how he wished to be an eagle, flying among the clouds! Just then the eagle flew closer to Ysang, its golden eyes meeting his own. The eagle dropped a fish from its beak at Ysang's feet.

Ysang took up the fish and bowed his head. "Thank you, my brother, for my first meal," Ysang said.

When Ysang had satisfied his hunger, he walked on and soon saw a great black bear trapped under a fallen pine. Ysang looked at the bear and felt pity for the beast's pain and fear, for was not he himself in pain from his fall and fearful of death at the hands of the orks? Ysang grasped the trunk of the pine tree in his strong arms and pulled, ignoring the new pain it caused him. Harder and harder he pulled, until he had freed the bear. The bear looked at him, bowed its shaggy head, and lumbered away into the woods. "Farewell, my brother," said Ysang.

Ysang began to walk again, but stopped when he saw a deadly viper in his path. Slowly, Ysang bent down and picked up a rock to crush the snake. He dared not take his eyes off of it for a moment, lest it strike and poison him. But as he gazed at it, the pattern of its red, black, brown and white scales mesmerized him with its beauty. "I cannot kill anything so lovely," he said as he put the rock down. And so he waited, as still as a hot night, until the snake crawled away. "Thank you for letting me pass, my brother," Ysang said and continued on his way.

For days Ysang walked, but his cracked ribs and bruises pained him and the hard journey tired him. He had little to eat and could not build up his strength. He knew that it would take him many weeks to get home and wondered if he could survive so long. Then he came to the edge of a mountain stream, where he washed his face in the cool, clear water. As he rested, he spied a clan of beavers by the water's edge. The beavers were building their home, and Ysang paid close attention to everything they did. It came to him that he too could build a home in these mountains, where he might live while he recovered his strength and health. "Thank you for your example, my brothers," he said.

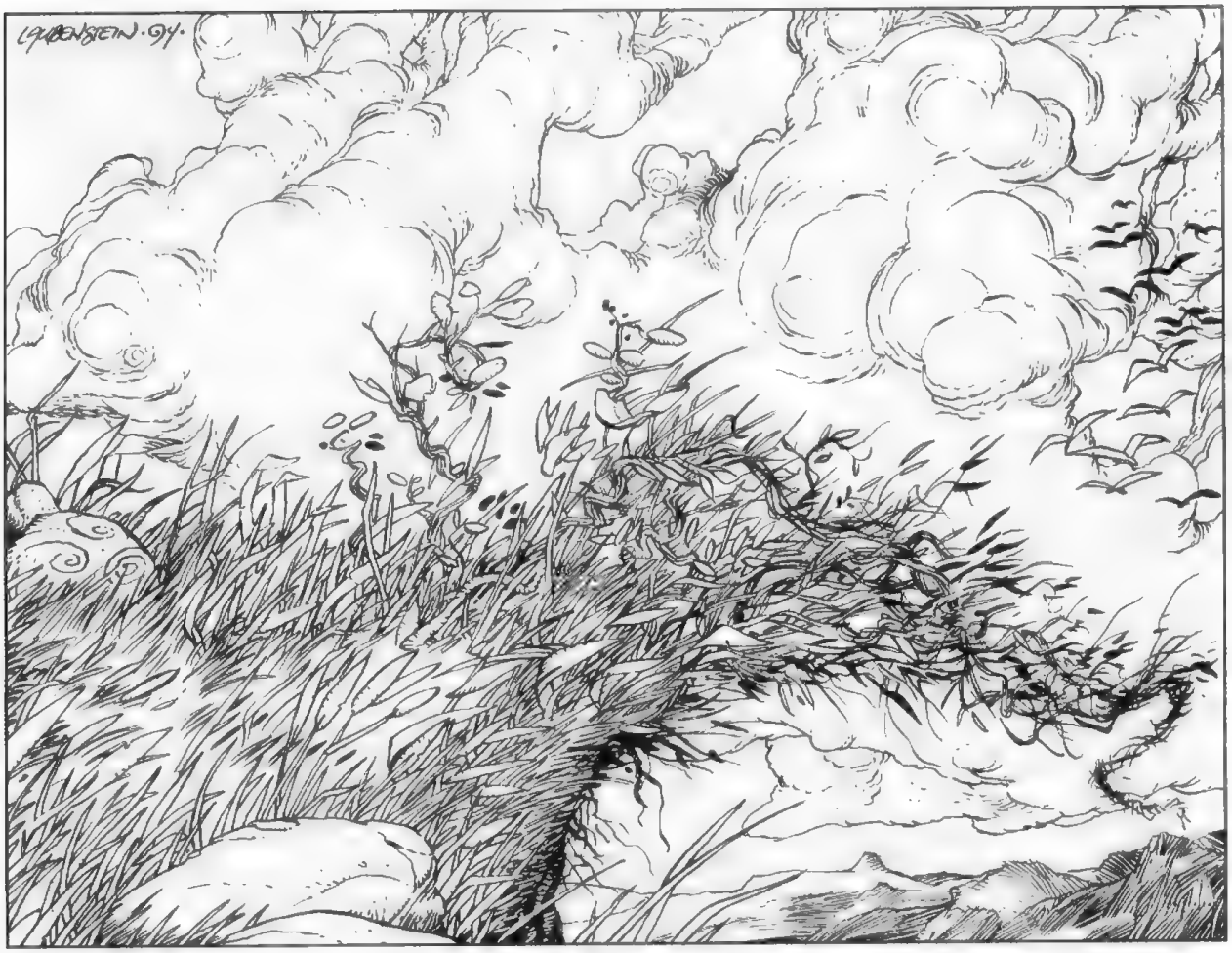
So Ysang did as the beavers did and built himself a shelter. He followed the bear and learned what roots and berries to eat. He followed the eagle and learned where to fish. He followed the viper and learned how to strike quickly at those who threatened his peace. For many weeks Ysang learned from the creatures of the mountains.

Then one day while Ysang was gathering talo berries, a band of ten ork scorchers found him. Eager to kill the young troll for sport, the orks gave chase, but Ysang disappeared into his shelter. The orks saw only a heap of twigs and branches, and they quarreled with each other over where Ysang had gone. As they passed Ysang's shelter, quarreling as loudly as a flock of crows, Ysang struck with the speed of the viper and killed two scorchers who had straggled behind. Then Ysang climbed a nearby tree. When the other orks came back to look for their comrades, Ysang swooped down on the first of them like an eagle, knocking him from his thundra beast. Then Ysang fought the ork like a bear, crushing him in his powerful arms.

The remaining seven orks closed in to kill Ysang, but his secret heart cried out, "Help me, brothers and sisters!" The bear ran from the woods, and the eagle flew down from the sky to help him. The viper crawled out from the ground, and the beaver came from the water to help him. Together, Ysang and his brothers and sisters defeated the orks.

Ysang never forgot the courage and kindness of the beasts and always called them his true kindred. And so do all who follow the way of Ysang, even to this day.

THE GRASS BRIDGE



Three hundred years before the Scourge, certain questors of the Passion Jaspree traveled to the Dragon Mountains to live. On a steep plateau high among the rocky slopes, these children of Jaspree found rich soil made of the fire-rock and knew that they would make their new home in this place that Jaspree had blessed. And so they built a village and they called it Taozana, or "Place of Peace and Abundance." And Jaspree blessed their efforts, and the earth yielded more to them than their numbers could eat or store. And so the people of Taozana packed up all that they did not need, and the strongest and nimblest of the young men and women climbed down the steep side of the plateau carrying the fruits and vegetables. They traveled to the nearby city of Jerris and gave away their bounty to feed the city's poor.

The people of Taozana lived this way for year upon year upon year, growing what they could, using what they needed and giving away what they did not. Children were born to them, grew up, married, and had more children,

until eight generations had been born and lived in Taozana. Jaspree smiled on them, and they found life good—except for the far-off whispers of the calamity that we know as the Scourge.

As time passed, the weather grew changeable, and the crops did not grow as well as they once had. The men and women of Taozana no longer traveled to Jerris with foodstuffs, for they could scarcely grow enough to feed themselves. Then a few crops succumbed to blight, which had never happened before. The people of Taozana still trusted Jaspree, but they could not help being afraid. Day and night, they implored the Passion to give them a sign; should they stay or find a new home? What was happening to the world, and what should they do to help heal it?

Then one day, a wooden airship appeared in the skies over Taozana. The people welcomed it with cheers and cries, believing that their Passion had at last sent them a sign. The ship landed in the center of the little village, and a dwarf in the livery of Throal stepped out. She carried a book in her hands, and her face was grave as she spoke. She told the gathered folk of Taozana that the Scourge was almost upon them, and that they must make haste to build a kaer to protect themselves from the evil ravages of the Horrors. When she finished speaking, she gave the book to the elders of Taozana, and departed. The people watched her go, amazed and afraid at the tidings she had brought them.

All that night, the elders listened as the folk of Taozana debated whether to leave their home, build a kaer, or trust in Jaspree to keep them safe from the coming catastrophe. Not until the sun rose the next morning did the elders and the people reach their decision: they would stay in Taozana, and they would build no kaer. Jaspree would shield them from the Horrors, if she willed; if not, the people would accept the fate their Passion decreed for them.

Harvest time drew near, and the people of Taozana went to the fields to gather pumpkins for the harvest festival. Just as they reached the fields, the ripening orange spheres burst open; each pumpkin hid a wormskull in its heart. With screams of terror at the sight of the masses of writhing maggots, the people fled to the village, pursued by the army of grinning Horrors. Mothers and fathers snatched up the children and those too frail to run, and all fled to the edge of the plateau. There they stopped and despaired, for the sides of the plateau were too steep for any but the most agile to climb down. Some of the people could save themselves from the Horrors, but only if they left their children and old folk behind.

With a single mind and a single heart, the people of Taozana chose to stay and face death together rather than leave behind a single one of their number. At the edge of the plateau, parents and children and grandchildren held each other and sang a song of thanks to Jaspree for the many happy years they had known at Taozana.

Touched by their love and faith, Jaspree bent her will to the plateau. Sprigs of grass, pumpkin vines, and fallen autumn leaves rose in the air, whirled around in mad dances and wove themselves together into grassy mats. Then the mats joined each-to-each, forming a wide bridge from the plateau to the gentle slope across the way. Seeing it, the people marveled, but they did not move toward it for it looked too flimsy to hold even the smallest child's weight. Then Jaspree whispered to them in the breeze that the Grass Bridge was the road of escape. Hearing their Passion's words, mothers took up their children and fathers held their aged parents, and all ran from the Horrors. And every single one of them crossed safely over the thin grass matting, as if they weighed nothing at all. But when the wormskulls reached the bridge, it refused to support their weight. Every one of the loathsome Horrors crashed through the grasses to die on the rocks two hundred feet below.

To this day the Grass Bridge stands, preserved by birds who repair it as they would their own nests.

ASTENDAR'S DEVOTION

In the years before the Scourge, when the races of Barsaive struggled to carve shelters against the Horrors from the living rock of the earth, the elven village of Golden Moon lay where the River Shiel meets the shores of Lake Ban. Golden Moon was so Named because the crystal waters of the lake turned the moon's reflection into a beautiful golden orb, and the elementalists in the village had a special gift for water magic. In times so ancient that the Scourge itself was no more than a passing, uneasy thought in the mind of the world, magicians from across Barsaive and the lands beyond had sought out Golden Moon's wizards and learned from them. Princes of Thera, ragged magicians from crystal raider clans, and countless others came to Golden Moon to learn the ways of water magic. And as the dark night of the Scourge drew near, still more came to learn the secrets that might save their peoples.

One such seeker was Anthros Lukar, a young and headstrong questor of Garlen from a village of humans deep in the Delaris Mountains. On his long journey to Golden Moon, Anthros had faced and conquered many perils; yet he carried in his heart a terrible fear, for he knew that the Horrors were drawing ever closer to his village's kaer. He knew also that his people needed certain knowledge that only Golden Moon's wizards might grant: the knowledge of how to draw water from stones in order to slake the thirst of those dwelling beneath the earth. He alone of all the villagers could learn the necessary enchantments, and so he made his lonely journey, not knowing what might await him upon his return.

In Golden Moon, Anthros devoured his lessons like a ravenous thundra beast. No others who studied along with him rose from their beds as early, nor retired as late. When other young men and women walked by the lake shore or talked of pleasant nonsense over a cup of wine, Anthros read his magical books and peppered the wizards with questions. Of all the eager strangers learning magic in Golden Moon, Anthros alone made no friends. He noticed no living being who was not a wizard—except for the lovely elf maiden, Kai R'Mai. Though he kept his regard a secret deep within his heart, he looked upon her beauty and grace and fell in love.

Now Kai R'Mai knew much of her people's magic, but little of the world beyond the village. She looked upon

the serious young human from the far West and marveled, for of all the young men she knew he alone seemed impervious to her charms. Kind words, friendly jests, gifts of fruit and wine to make his studies less burdensome—nothing Kai did earned her more than swiftly mumbled thanks from the somber youth. Not even her beauty could make him put aside his books and speak with her. And the less he seemed to notice her, the more Kai desired his attention. By the end of seven days, Kai's interest in Anthros had warmed to love, and after much thought she devised a playful way to attract his attention.

Back in those days, as now, folk ended the evening meal with a honey-filled sweet bread. Just before the village sat down to eat one night, Kai took up Anthros's sweet and cast over it a subtle enchantment to make the honey form itself into amusing pictographs. By this jest, Kai hoped to pierce Anthros's aloof veneer. To her surprise, Anthros broke open the enchanted pastry and ate it in two gulps without even seeing the pictures beneath his nose.

Not one to be easily discouraged, Kai R'Mai enchanted sweet bread after sweet bread every night, changing the honey-shapes from playful notes to loving poems to bawdy couplets and randy jokes. All these Anthros devoured in seeming ignorance, while the rest of the village laughed at the spectacle. Though the young man's heart burned within him to see his beloved become the object of others' jests, he dared not speak lest love distract him from his learning. And Kai went from a merry maiden to a sad, pale shadow of herself, convinced that all her efforts to win Anthros's love had failed.

After three months had passed in this way, Kai sought solace in a grove of trees where the Passion Astendar often walked. Astendar took pity on the lovely maiden and the handsome youth, and bade Kai R'Mai to make the evening's sweet bread with her own hands. The Passion told her to think of her love for Anthros while she shaped the pastry, to Name the sweet bread after him, and to serve the sweet to Anthros herself. "Do all these things," said Astendar, in a voice like the sweetest music, "and I will open the gate of your love's hidden heart."

Kai did as the Passion bade her, and when evening came she served Anthros every course of the meal. Not with the meat, nor the bread, nor the fruits of the earth did the youth even gaze at the maiden who tended him so lovingly. But Kai was not saddened, for she remembered Astendar's promise. As the meal drew to a close, Kai placed Anthros's sweet bread on a plate and set it down before him.

Anthros bit into the pastry, and a look of wonder came over his face. Slowly, as if its taste was a marvel to his tongue, the young man ate the small mouthful of sweet bread. Then he looked at Kai R'Mai, and adoration shone in his eyes. The flood of feeling he had kept hidden in his heart surged forth. Anthros clasped Kai's hands in his own and professed his undying love for her. The sound of her voice, the delicate scent of her skin as she passed him, the music of her laughter, all these things and more he had loved since he first saw her and would love until the day he died. At Anthros's declaration, all the village wept for joy; even the Passions wiped tears from their eyes. So moved were Kai's mother and father that they called Anthros "beloved son" and gave their blessing on a marriage if Anthros and Kai desired it. And at these words, the village shouted Astendar's Name in praise.

But then Anthros spoke softly to Kai, and the maiden bowed her head in sorrow. The village fell silent as Anthros told them that he could not marry Kai. Though to stay with her forever was the dearest wish of his heart, he must go back to his village. The water magic he had learned at Golden Moon was his people's only hope. He must return to them with his hard-won knowledge, even though the Horrors stalking the land to the west might already have destroyed his home. To risk his own life meant nothing as long as any hope remained of saving his village, but he would not submit Kai to such an uncertain fate.

Then Kai pleaded with him, declaring that she did not wish to live except by his side. Still he refused her, and Kai, in despair, called Astendar's Name. The Passion appeared before them all, and added Her pleas to Kai's. But Anthros was adamant. Not for anything would he risk exposing his beloved to one moment of a Horror's attentions. Hearing the wisdom in his words, the Passion blessed the young couple, softening their bitter anguish to a gentle, wistful longing such as we often feel for departed joys. To honor their loving courage, Astendar declared that any two lovers who consecrate their sweet breads to each other in honor of Kai R'Mai and Anthros Lukar will know each other's hearts in ways that others never can.

And so to this day, lovers bless their pastries, Naming them for distant mates in the hope that when they break open the sweet bread, the honey inside will form a message from their beloved. And to this day, Astendar's Devotion gives us all hope for the safety of those nearest our hearts.

LYLLARIA'S MIRROR

In the last years before the Scourge, the people of a small village Named Landsborne built a kaer as others did in preparation for the Long Night. As the world grew darker and more dangerous, the village folk worked harder and harder, faster and faster, fearing that they might not finish their kaer before catastrophe befell them. But despite all their effort the work went slowly, for Landsborne was only a small village. The headman of Landsborne set guards at the approaches to the village, and the guards slew many smaller Horrors. Yet still, the village folk did not finish the kaer. Soon messengers arrived to say that Throal was closing its great doors, yet still the village folk had not finished their kaer. And as the world grew darker and more dangerous still, the village folk could only work on the kaer and pray.

On the very day that the kaer's last stone was laid in place and the last symbol of protection engraved upon its doors, a ragged band of elves came to the village. They said they had fled from Wyrm Wood, preferring to take their chances in the wild world rather than agree to the mad schemes of their Queen. Many of them, they said, had died in the Horror-infested land through which they had traveled. Unable to endure any more hardship and danger and with nowhere else to go, they begged the headman to let them stay. In return for the gift of shelter, the elves offered Landsborne a treasure of great power: Lyllaria's Mirror. They said the mirror would warn the kaer of approaching danger by showing all who looked in it the nature and whereabouts of their enemies. They said they had carried this mirror with them from Wyrm Wood, and that only its power had enabled them to survive their journey. They said that the power of the mirror, wedded to their own magic, would give Kaer Landsborne even greater protection against the Horrors. All these things they said, and so the headman and the people let them in.

Ten years passed, and in those years the Horrors attacked Kaer Landsborne again and again and again. But the kaer's walls stood strong, and the village folk said that Lyllaria's Mirror had saved them. And the elves whispered in the people's ears that gazing into the magical mirror would make them powerful. And so the people went to gaze into it, one by one. And as each of them looked into the smooth glass, the Horror hidden within it trapped their minds and enslaved them to its will. And thus by an act of kindness to strangers, by heeding the artful plea of the wily elves, the village headman had brought Kaer Landsborne's doom upon it.

The Horror, called Mindrender by those who at first escaped it, projected its evil powers through the mirror. The villagers' minds turned to violence, and their magicians ceased to keep up the kaer's defenses, pursuing their own petty quarrels instead. For twenty years Kaer Landsborne ate away at itself, until the protective wards collapsed. But by that time there was nothing left for the Horrors outside to claim. Mindrender had destroyed everyone in the kaer, save a few slaves it kept alive for its awful amusement. When the Scourge ended, some of those slaves escaped Mindrender's weakening grasp and fled into the wilderness. My grandsire was one, and it is for his sake that I tell this dark tale.

No one knows for certain what became of Lyllaria's Mirror … whether it still lies in the empty rooms of Kaer Landsborne, or whether some benighted soul took it from that resting place. For the sake of our world, I pray that it remains within the lost kaer, where the Horror within it can trap no more unwary souls.

LAUBENSTEIN

THE DANCE OF KORRENCIA

You who know nothing of the power of dance, let me tell you of the Dance of Korrencia. The dancer pure in heart who performs these graceful movements will experience the true magic of dance and know power beyond the dreams of ordinary folk.

The first steps you must take are those of Korrencia, the brave elven troubadour, when she first fell into the hands of the Therans. The steps of slavery that she trod, you must tread to feel her pain, anguish and humiliation. Three times you must perform this step, for the three years she lived in the foul Theran slave pits.

During those nights, those long nights chained, Korrencia plotted and schemed. Never once did she allow her captors to chain her mind as they had chained her body. Never once must you allow your steps to falter as you stamp out the elven Rhythm of the Stars.

After time upon time had passed, Korrencia hit upon a way to free the slaves of the palace. So too must you hit your mark at the beginning of the step called abellia.

Allowing the rage hidden in her mind to teach her body what it must know to succeed, Korrencia bent her graceful neck to her Theran masters and pretended obedience. Drinking in Korrencia's worship and fear as Korrencia wished to drink of their blood, the Therans swayed to the music of her hatred. Let Korrencia's hate sweep upward like flames as your feet reach higher and faster and flow with the Music of the Fire as you dance with Korrencia the greedy round of the Therans. Then, as Korrencia did in the darkness of her cell, let your muscles flicker through the steps of a Dance of Power.

For months, Korrencia practiced her dance, perfecting every movement. The slightest mistake would render it more useless and base than any Theran amusement. So must you dance the Dance of Time as the long months pass by.

When she had perfected her dance, Korrencia prepared her fellow slaves for escape. An ocean of whispers filled the nights in the underbelly of the Theran palace; now you must dance the Whispers.

Bowing before the bloated Lord and Master of the Therans, cunning Korrencia told him of a dance she had created in his honor. Curling against him and arching as the Great Dancer Ephelia taught us so well in bygone days, Korrencia convinced the prideful Theran of the innocent merit of her intent. Be certain to play both parts, for only by both sets of steps is the Posturing of Thera exposed.

A message went out to all the Therans of the palace and surrounding town, to attend on the lord that very night. The calls of the bugle, the busy preparation for the evening's feast, the scents of sweat, wine and perfumes filled the air and swirled together in the closeness of the palace. As each Theran took his place, the tension mounted. Three times the Pacing pattern must touch the earth and move the air, until the water of sweat mingles with the fire of your body. Then you are ready, as Korrencia was, to face her Theran master in a combat of her own choosing.

To the accompaniment of the subdued clapping of the slaves, Korrencia began her dance. No words could describe her honeyed movements, the tilt of her head, the twirl of her skirts. Her leaps were breathtaking, her spins superb. Nothing can compare to it, nor should you make the attempt. Instead, make the ancient Movements of Honor and Battle.

As Korrencia danced, her Theran captors grew slackjawed. Glasses crashed to the floor in time to the beat of the music, and not a single Theran eye could turn from Korrencia's commanding form. Majesty was hers that night; make it yours as well.

On and on Korrencia danced, as the slaves freed themselves and fled the palace that had been the tomb of so many before them. Even when the echoes of the final slave's footsteps (the final slave but one) faded into the night, still Korrencia danced. On into the night Korrencia danced, every foot and finger ever in place, for one mistake could cost the lives of all. Hours upon hours after her fellows had fled, the brave and beautiful Korrencia slipped to the cold marble floor in the Spiral of the Dying Rose, dead before the first of the enraged Therans could reach her. She, too, had escaped her captors' grasp.

And the slaves were free. As are we.

THE FIRE POOL

In the fertile river valley lived a brother and a sister,
A brave and noble family
Wrought through honor and through strife.
"Let us journey," said the sister, "to the high and crystal mountains,
To the mountains that can teach us
To be strong and win at life."
"I will go with you, dear sister," said the brave and noble brother.
"We can journey to the caverns,
We can bring great honor home."
"Beg our father to consent," pleaded his wise and cunning sister,
"I'll tell mother not to worry,
Not to cry when we leave them."

So the two began their journey, through the wild and untamed mountains,
To the mythic endless cavern
From which beasts and creatures came.
There they went to face the challenge of the deep and blinding darkness,
To transform their simple family,
To bring home an honored Name.
They brought with them only water and a sacred text to pray on,
Loaves of bread to nourish them,
Bow and arrow and a blade.
Though the expedition taxed them, they met every danger bravely,
Ceasing not their splendid journey
Until by the cave they laid.

Then the sister, gazing toward the black and yawning cavern mouth,
Heard a voice speak deep within her,
Urging calm and contemplation.
"Let us stop to fast, my brother. Let us fast and meditate."
So with purpose pure as water,
She began her meditation.
Brother tried to follow sister on the path of pure intention,
But his pride arose and spoke
Louder than his inmost soul.
Swelled with pride, his heart said to him,
"I am bravest, I am purest,
I can find my way alone;
I need no aid to reach our goal."

With her meditations ended, noble sister ventured forward,
Following her favorite brother
Who had jumped into the lead.

"Follow closely, little sister, stay behind me,"
said the brother,
Said the bold and prideful brother,
Striding forward with great speed.
So the two explored the passage, keeping close,
though never trembling.
Brother walked with blade unsheathed,
And sister nocked her arrow straight.
Through the darkened cave they ventured,
toward a distant, glowing circle,
Never caring what might lie there,
Sworn to make their family great.

Drawing near the tunnel's ending, what they
saw gave them a fright;
At the end of their dark journey
Lay a boiling pool of fire.
Now the brother halted, gaping silent at the
flaming shoreline,
Awestruck at the conflagration,
Fearing death within the pyre.
"Brother!" called his braver sister, eyes alight
with flames of courage,
"Let us take our weapons closer
And immerse them if we can."
Clear-eyed, brave and clever sister realized
this haunting fire
Could not be Name-givers' magic,
Nor the work of Nature's hand.

"I agree," the brother said, but soft lest sister
hear his fears.
His sister stepped toward the fire,
Eager for a hero's deed.
Down the cavern wall she climbed, bruised
by stones and singed by heat;
"Forward," said her brave heart, "arms of flame
Are yours, should you succeed."
Suddenly the rock beneath her feet betrayed
her; down she fell,
Sliding, crashing down the cavern
Toward the hotly burning fires!
"Brother, help me!" sister cried, reaching
toward where he stood staring,
But he pulled away in fear,
Sprang for safety higher, higher.

From the blaze the sister screamed,
shaming brother to his bones;
Yet he watched and did not aid her,
Only watched her drown below.
Soon he could no longer see her body through
the crimson flashes;
Soon the heat took all his breath.
His eyes saw only fire's glow.
The ground beneath him shook like thunder;
flame shot to the cavern's roof.
Deep within the fearsome rumbling,
Brother heard his sister's voice.
"Wicked brother, coward brother!"
boomed the voice out of the pit,
"Would you leave me here forever?
Will you make that awful choice?"

Then the brother, weeping, fell onto his
knees and begged for grace.
"Pity me!" he cried before her,
"I was weak and cowardly!"
To join his sister's fiery doom was all that
his shamed soul desired,
But his body would not obey him;
So he stayed there on his knees.
Suddenly a graceful hand reached toward
him from the fire's heart;
A hand no longer of this world,
Reaching through the skin of flame.
His sister touched his forehead lightly, searing
flesh; he bore the pain
With courage; flinching not, repentant,
As she said, "This is your fame."

Brother fled from his dead sister through
the dark and winding passage,
Through the cave to sunlit surface
With the scar of her touch on him.
"Come back for me! Help me!" cried the
soul that once lived as his sister.
In his head, her dying screams
Echoed until his spirit left him.
Through the centuries of the Scourge,
we have kept this tale alive.
Still lies the sister in the pool,
Alive in flames she cannot die.
Though the brother died a madman,
for her sake he told her story.
Somewhere in the oldest mountains,
A fire pool holds her sad cries.

LISAR'S WONDROUS PACK OF TALES

When the world was young and clean, when we could travel the land without fear of Horrors, the folk of Barsaive told wonderful stories. Troubadours were more common in those days, and many had great skill. But none were as skilled as the two trolls Lisar and Hakeba. These two went from town to town, village to village, spinning tales to catch the heart and mind as well as the ear and eye. And every story they invented or heard, they wrote down and placed in Lisar's wondrous Pack of Tales.

Life had not always been so easy for them, however. Before Lisar and Hakeba came to tell tales together, not many folk would listen to either of them alone. And even though Lisar had the Pack of Tales, by herself she could not draw stories from it that would keep the people's attention. Only the stories she told with Hakeba made the people laugh and cry and clamor for more.

After many years, Hakeba (who was the elder) died. Lisar missed him greatly, and her stories became mere shadows of themselves. Finally, after mourning Hakeba for the proper time, Lisar set off in search of someone new to tell tales with. She wandered high and low, near and far, telling tales for coin (though not doing very well). But nowhere could she find the partner she sought. Nowhere could she find the one who could lend true inspiration to her Pack of Tales.

One day, Lisar came to the town of Kis-roath, just off the King's Road to Throal. She saw the folk all gathering in the town square and asked a passing dwarf-child where they were going. "To see the troubadour, of course," said the child. "He is a windling, and we have never seen him before. I hope he will tell tales as funny as the last troubadour did." Lisar, curious to see the windling, followed the child to the square and settled down for a good listen.

Well, it turned out the "great windling bard, Marek," as he called himself, had little skill at his craft. In fact, he was worse than any troubadour Lisar had ever heard. His eyes were flat; he did not see deeply and so could not discern what the people wanted to hear. His gestures were ill-timed, his voice thin, and once he even forgot the thread of the tale he was weaving! All around Lisar, folk muttered and groused, heaping scorn on Marek for his terrible tale-telling. But Lisar felt sorry for the poor, hapless windling, for she remembered what it felt like to lose an eager crowd.

Poor Marek went on spinning his tale, trying to ignore the folk who left one by one. As he spoke the last few words, he looked around and saw that the few who remained were slouched back, comfortably sleeping. In the windling's face, as he gazed around the square, Lisar saw anger and a heartbreaking loneliness. But before Lisar could speak a word of comfort to him, Marek sprang from the ground and fluttered away. As he flitted past a fat human who was snoring as loudly as three thundra beasts, Marek stopped, hovered, and then reached toward the human's dangling purse.

Marek loosened the fat purse with quick and nimble fingers, but it was so heavy that it fell from his arms and spilled a heap of jingling coins all over the ground. The sound woke the fat human, who grabbed Marek and shook him, crying, "Thief! Windling thief!"

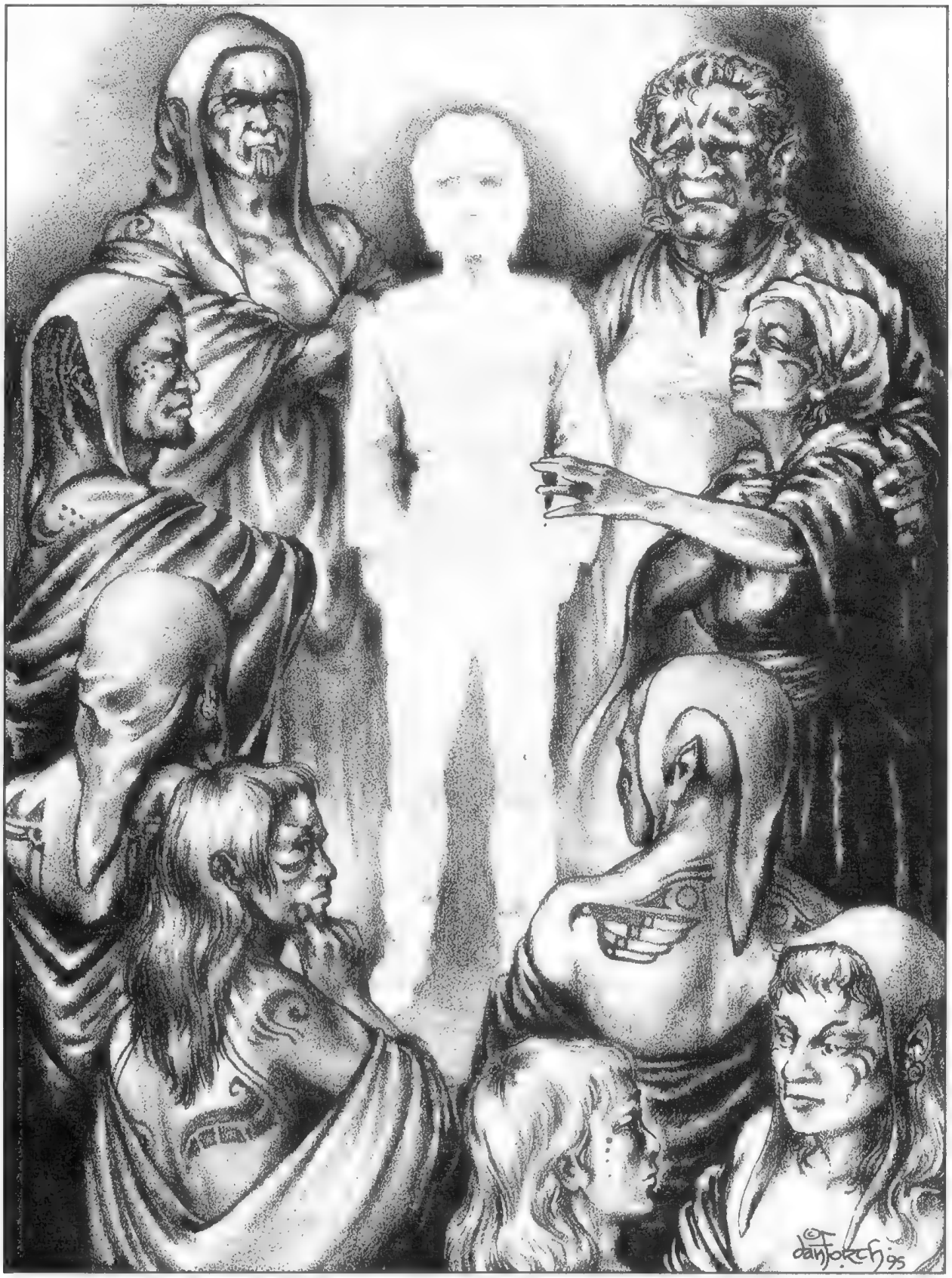
Just then Lisar said, "I saw it all. Your purse fell open, and the little fellow was gathering up your coin for you." The human looked at Lisar, disbelief plain on his fat face—but at the sight of her strong arms and determined expression, he decided he had no wish to quarrel. He let the windling go with a curt nod of thanks and took to his heels.

And from that day on, Lisar stayed at Marek's side.

The two of them traveled to the next town, where a crowd gathered in the square to hear the "great windling bard" tell stories. Before the people came, Lisar took a story from the Pack of Tales for Marek—and the windling told it so well that the whole town clapped and cheered. His thin voice gained new strength, his gestures came at just the right time, and he made the people laugh until tears ran down their faces. And from that day onward, Marek was a proud and happy windling. But he never thanked Lisar, who had given him such success with her wondrous Pack of Tales.

Lisar helped Marek in other ways as well. She knew all the best inns to eat and sleep at, and all the important folk of every town to whom Marek should speak in order to build his fame far and wide. And he did build his fame far and wide, but never did he tell anyone that he owed his fame to Lisar and her wondrous Pack of Tales. Now some of you may wonder why Lisar did not slay this proud and petty windling for his dishonorable ingratitude—or at least why she did not leave him and find someone else with whom to share her Pack of Tales. But Lisar was a true troubadour, and for her nothing satisfied honor as much as seeing a good tale well told. She knew that it was her stories that made Marek great—she did not need the adulation of the world to tell her so.

After many years, when Marek reached one hundred and fifty-seven years, the noble Lisar died. Suddenly, the "great Marek" stopped traveling and stopped telling stories. For a time people came to him and begged for stories, but he turned everyone away. Some said Marek's age had made him weak in the head so that he couldn't remember his stories any more, but the truth was that without Lisar, the windling could not use the Pack of Tales. Lisar left it to him as a gift, but he was too soft-headed to learn its secrets. The "great bard Marek" died in his hundred and sixty-first year, and his own story is now bound into the pack. And no one knows what has become of Lisar's wondrous Pack of Tales.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THE NAMELESS LAD

Barsaive is an empty land still, echoing with the faint cries of the Horrors' countless victims. Even the plants and animals that have begun to reclaim their places seem to feel still the injuries done to their kind during the Horrors' long, unchallenged reign. Throughout this lonely wilderness wanders one among us who is lonelier still—the one Name-givers call the Nameless Lad.

Each of us, both great and small, is a Name-giver. We pride ourselves on our Names. With them, we carve out our unique lives in this vast universe to which we all belong. Without our Names, what would we be? How would we know who we truly are? None of us knows—except the Nameless Lad.

During the last years of the Scourge, a human boy was born to a kaer in the south of Barsaive. Strong and healthy and wailing he was born, like many other babes—but he was also different. His mother and father Named him, as all parents name their young. Yet the first name they chose was soon forgotten by the folk of the kaer, and so the boy's parents chose another. This second Name somehow sounded wrong, and so they chose a third. But no one in the kaer, not even the boy's father and mother, could say the third Name right. No matter what Name the parents chose for their son, something always went wrong with it. It seemed as if Names did not wish to be tied to the boy, as if no Name wanted him. The boy's parents wept and called on the Passions to aid them, but still they could find no Name right for their son. Soon, the folk of the kaer began to mutter that the lad must have been born Horror-marked, for all Names to refuse him.

As they boy grew older, the other children shunned him as if he carried an invisible plague. Mothers and fathers snatched their sons and daughters from his path; questors of Garlen refused to heal his ills. None except his mother would give him food; she sometimes saved him scraps meant for the pigs. And all this time, the Nameless Lad uttered no word of complaint or anger. He accepted every slight as his due and spent his time exploring the tunnels and caverns out of sight of other people.

As the time of the boy's adult Name-taking neared, the folk of the kaer murmured again that the lad must be Horror-tainted. On the eve of the Naming ritual, the lad's mother and father came to him dressed in the white of mourning and told him that the kaer's people planned to sacrifice him at dawn in hopes of appeasing the Horrors that drew ever nearer to their frail sanctuary. This news saddened the boy but did not surprise him. Gathering together his few possessions, the Nameless Lad slipped away and hid in the kaer's depths.

A year and a day passed, and still the boy remained hidden. The folk of the kaer searched for him, growing ever more certain that they must destroy the Nameless Lad to save their kaer from the Horrors. Finally, the kaer's leaders discovered an old rockfall in the farthest reaches of the kaer's tunnels. Suddenly convinced that the boy was hiding behind the boulders, the leaders ordered laborers to remove them.

As the last of the boulders fell away, the leaders gave a cry of triumph that suddenly turned to cries of terror and anguish as the oozing, rot-ridden shape of a Horror emerged from the newly uncovered hole in the kaer wall. Soon all that remained of the kaer's people were scraps of flesh, mindless bodies, and the echoes of their dying screams. None survived the Horrors' onslaughts, except the Nameless Lad.

Again and again, invading Horrors left the boy untouched, as if he did not exist. When the lad realized that the Horrors would not destroy him, he steeled his heart and walked out among them, watching and remembering the dreadful fate of his people at the hands of the Horrors and their own irrational fears.

It is said the Nameless Lad spent years within the dead kaer before leaving it to wander Barsaive, his only companions the tomes he filled with his thoughts and observations. It is said that when he first came out of the cold ground, he was the only Name-giver wandering the surface of Barsaive—he was the only witness to sights so terrible that the greatest hero might shrink from them in fear. And still he wanders across Barsaive, seeing and remembering all that happens under the wide sky. But in all his wanderings, the Nameless Lad has never seen or known anything so terrible as the eagerness of his own people to kill him simply to ease their fear of what they did not understand.

THE LOST DREAM OF WYRM WOOD

Strong you grew in ancient days
When green and living heart you bore.
Soft, your flowers kissed our feet;
Alas, that Wyrm Wood lives no more!
Your gentle breeze a lover's kiss,
Your stars like bright eyes gazing down.
These you gave and more than this,
Alas, for Wyrm Wood's fallen crown!
Each green leaf a lover's touch,
Each bird's song a lullaby;
Beauty's home and heart were yours,
Alas for Wyrm Wood, doomed to die!
Still do your beloved seek you,
Though your beauty's turned to gall.
Still you draw us ever toward you,
Seeking comfort, risking all.
Though your love is bitter ashes,
Though the sharp thorns tear your heart,
While you bleed red tears of anguish
We will come, and ne'er depart.
In the Wood we'll meet with Death,
And speak your Name with our last breath.

I sing sad songs in honor of my friend Uthar, who left us scarcely a year ago. He was a maker of jewels and a singer of songs so beautiful that the saddest heart grew lighter at the sound of his voice. His eyes were as bright as the gems he cut, and he moved with the grace of a slender young tree in the wind. I knew him well and loved him as a brother.

He first began to change in the Raining Time before last. Where once he had sung songs about Nature's beauty and the wonder of life, he began to sing mournful ballads. Songs of lost love, of hope betrayed, of joy turned to ashes, all these he sang. He worked more slowly and often put down his jeweler's tools to stand by the window and gaze out at the gray rain. Everyone said it was the rain that oppressed him—that when the Dry Time came and the sun shone again, Uthar would sing glad songs once more. But on the first clear night of the Dry Time, I saw Uthar standing in the doorway of his house, gazing up at the stars with the longing look of a rejected lover. When I went to share the joy of the sight with him, I saw tears rolling down his cheeks. I spoke his Name, but he did not answer me—he simply stood there, gazing at the stars and crying without a sound.

Four days after that, Uthar stopped working in the middle of the day and started to walk out of the village. I went after him and asked where he was going, unweaponed and with no clothing or provisions packed.

"To Wyrm Wood," he told me, his eyes clouded with dreams—Uthar, whose eyes had always shone so clear.

I put a gentle hand upon his arm and told him he must not go—not yet. "Your father will return from the market town tomorrow. Stay until then, Uthar, so that you may bid him good-bye." Garlen be praised, he listened to me, though his footsteps dragged all the way home. At the village gate, he stopped and looked toward the far horizon. The purple haze of heather on the far-off hills seemed to call to him, as if it was playing some music that he couldn't quite hear. His eyes seemed to pierce the distance, and every line of his body was tense with longing.

After his father's return, Uthar tried again to leave. His parents and brothers followed him, arguing and pleading with him to stay, but he shook them off angrily—even his mother, to whom he had never spoken a single angry word. As he began to stride out of the village gate, his brother Anthyr struck him, and he fell senseless to the ground. They picked him up gently and carried him inside. And all around me, I heard the voices of the village folk whispering with dread, "Wood longing ... wood longing."

He tried to leave the village many more times, growing more frenzied with every failed effort. He ceased to sing at all; indeed, music angered him because the sound of it drowned out the bird song from Wyrm Wood. His family had to tie him to his pallet to keep him from wandering off at night. Soon he ceased to eat and grew so weak that he could scarcely stand. Yet still he kept trying to get up, to leave the village and go to Wyrm Wood. Everyone told him Wyrm Wood was no more, that the Scourge and the Elf Queen had corrupted it beyond recognition. But Uthar would not listen. He lay on his pallet, dazed and weak, plucking feebly at the coverlet and muttering of the beauties of Wyrm Wood. Once, after a night of evil dreams, he sat upright and shouted, "I am coming! I swear it! Wait for me—don't abandon me!" Nothing eased his pain and anguish, and we feared that he would die. And so, when the Raining Time drew near again, I said that I would accompany him to Wyrm Wood.

For the first time in many months, Uthar got up from his sickbed and ate and seemed to see the world around him. We knew the wood longing still had him in its grip, because Wyrm Wood was all he talked of. I reminded him of Blood Wood's perils, but he seemed not to hear me.

As we made ready for our journey, a faint glimmer of Uthar's old happiness came back to him. As he helped me pack our saddlebags (with gentle patience, as if humoring a child), he talked of how beautiful the Wood was, and how glad he was to share it with me. His words made me turn away, lest he see the tears I could no longer hold back.

At dawn, in a chill rain, we left the village. By the time we had traveled a scant few miles, I was shivering with cold inside my woolen cloak. But Uthar rode singing, as if the sun shone as bright as fire. The downpour did not vex him, he hardly seemed to notice it. All through our journey, it rained, and Uthar's body shivered in the damp just as mine did; but his body's discomfort could not pierce the dream of Wyrm Wood that veiled his mind. With every step he grew stronger, and more of his old joy shone in his face. Even the perils of the road, which you all know only too well, could not turn his thoughts from the happiness of returning to Wyrm Wood.

At long last, we rode to the top of a grassy ridge and saw our destination. Below us, like a dazzling pool of dark green water, lay Blood Wood. Even I gasped at the beauty of it, and for a wild moment wondered if Uthar had been right after all. Had Wyrm Wood somehow returned? But then I felt the coldness of it, as if the voice of Death had whispered a warning in my ear. Begone, said the wind rustling through the trees. I know you not. Leave me to my pain ... leave me ...

Beside me, Uthar gave a glad shout and spurred his horse to a gallop. As if paralyzed, I watched him reach the shadows of the trees before I thought to set my own mount to running. Terrible foreboding rose in my throat, choking me so that I could not even scream. But even if I could have, it would have been too late, for a huge gray wolf galloped out of the forest and hurled itself at Uthar, knocking him from his horse. He had laughed with sheer joy as he watched it come, but his laughter turned to screams as the creature bit and tore at his flesh. Over Uthar's screams, I heard the howling of the rest of its pack.

Even as I slid off my horse and drew my long knife, the thorn-pierced wolf sank its teeth into Uthar's throat. His body went rigid, then limp. The distant howls grew louder, filling the awful silence. I mounted my horse and galloped away, terrified that I might hear the sounds of pursuit. Thank the Passions my horse found its way back up the slope, for my tears for Uthar blinded me and to this day I do not remember how I reached the top of the ridge.

Like many an elf before him, Uthar had returned to Wyrm Wood—but Blood Wood killed him. As, in a way, it has killed us all.

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How Lor'jak Bonetusk Found His Passion

Some years ago, not long after the end of the Scourge, a Bonetusk drakkar met the Therans in battle over the Twilight Peaks. The crew of the drakkar fought well and bravely—remembered be their Names!—but could not win against five Theran ships. The drakkar went down in flames and crashed against the frozen side of a mountain. Only the lowliest shipmate, Lor'jak Bonetusk, survived—and even he was badly wounded. Alone, injured, freezing and without food, Lor'jak had not long to live unless he could find shelter. So Lor'jak crawled along the steep mountainside, ignoring pain and his growing fear that he was lost in the Peaks. He could have been a mere drakkar-length from a troll village and not have known it, so dark was the frozen night. Growing weaker and weaker with every passing moment, Lor'jak pushed on, driven by his will to survive and his thirst for vengeance.

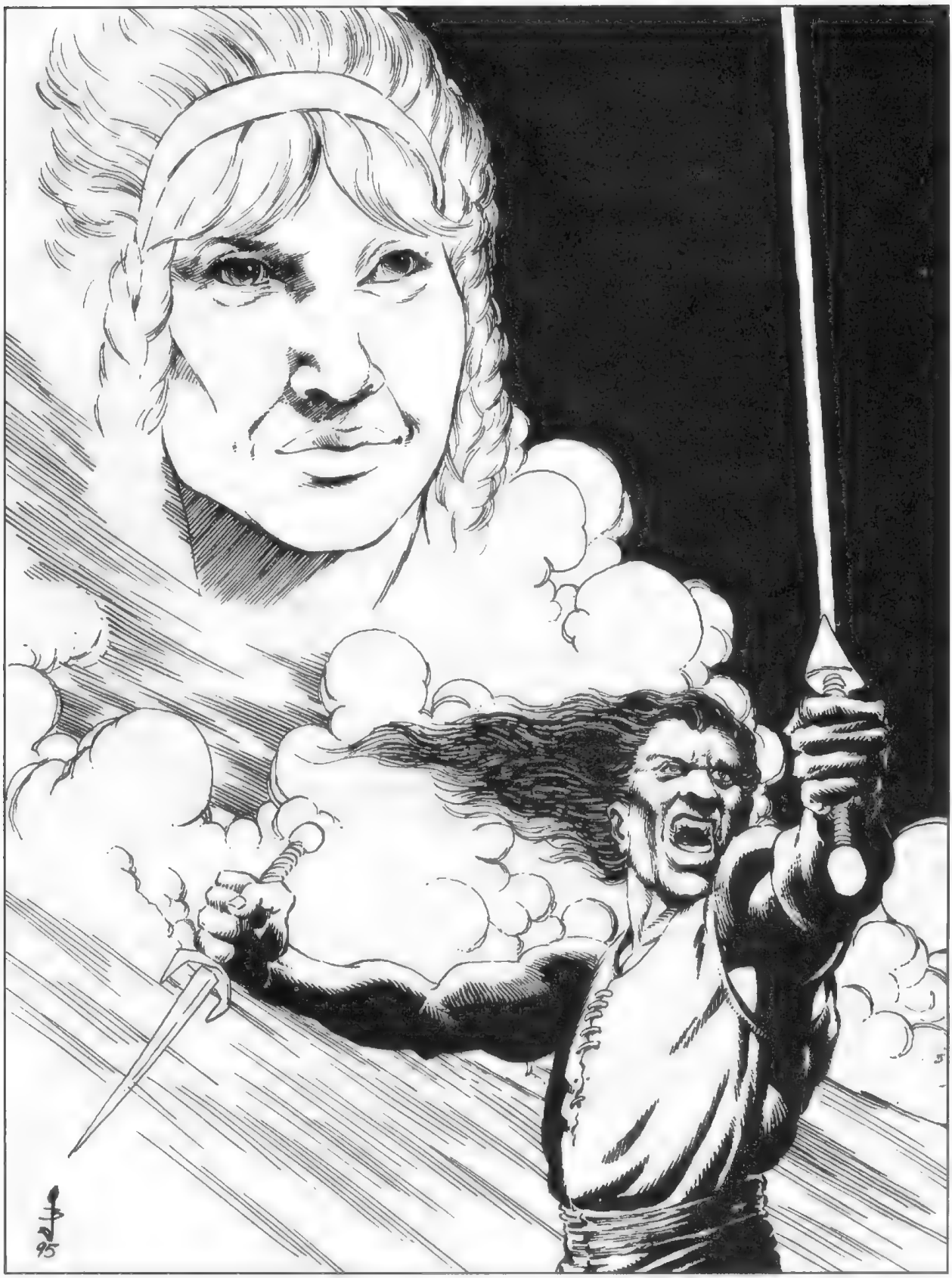
Just as his strength began to fail, Lor'jak saw a golden light shining from the mountainside ahead. He made his way toward it and discovered a cave, its entrance covered by hanging moss through which the warm light spilled. With the last of his strength, Lor'jak dragged his battered body inside the cave. Instead of bare rock, he found a fantastical garden of plants growing in the golden light. A gentle spring bubbled and sang nearby, and small birds hopped from branch to branch among the flowering bushes. Scattered on the ground amid the soft grass were gleaming gold coins and glowing gems. Wondering if he had gone to the realm of departed spirits, Lor'jak collapsed on the grass. Just before he fell asleep, he saw a troll woman, tall and beautiful, who knelt beside him and placed his aching head upon her lap. All night, Lor'jak dreamed of the woman tending him and healing his wounds, giving him the loving comfort of a mother.

When he awoke the next morning, the cave was gone. Instead of soft grass beneath him, Lor'jak felt hard rock and saw that he was nestled in a rocky crag that had shielded him from the wind. His injuries had disappeared, and his stomach felt as full as if he had eaten a hearty breakfast. Healed and refreshed, Lor'jak made his way back to his moot. Upon his safe arrival home, he gave honor to the Passion Garlen, whom he knew had saved his life that night—even though he had never served her.

Lor'jak told his tale to his wife and children and to all others who would listen. Many of the mootfolk searched the Twilight Peaks for the cave Lor'jak spoke of, but none could find it. The wondrous cave remained hidden, even from adepts whose Disciplines should have assured their success in finding it. The cave belongs to Garlen, and she will only reveal it to those in dire need of its healing.

And Lor'jak? He lived to a great age because Garlen blessed him. One day, he gathered his few possessions and set off alone into the Peaks in search of the healing Passion. His great-grandsons, fearing that their beloved grandsire would die on the mountain, followed him up the narrow, winding trails. But all traces of Lor'jak's passing vanished long before his kin approached the highest slopes.

Some say Lor'jak died that day and was eaten by wild beasts, but we Bonetusks know better. Lor'jak returned to Garlen's magical cave, where he lives in peace and contentment with the Passion who saved his life.



THE LOVE OF TONLAA AND ENARD

✣ ✣ ✣

Long ago, there lived a great warrior Named Tonlaa. He fought in many great wars that destroyed many kingdoms and saw many other realms rise from the blood he helped spill on the battlefield. He fought and killed creatures so terrible that we can no longer imagine them—the venomous kriskrata, the ravening dargomand, the hissing vandrake. His Name became feared throughout the land, and all knew him as a man of terrible temper who grabbed what he wanted and made no apologies to those weaker than he.

Tonlaa had known many women in his day, but none had won his heart. Then one day, as the great warrior traveled to the city of Uajnul to fight a duel against the city's twin sorceror-kings, he happened to pass a great estate on the outskirts of a town called Barhurst. Through the gates of the plantation, he saw several young women playing a game of vrastee on the lawn. The youngest of these women looked at Tonlaa as he passed, and in that instant he was wracked by love. Setting aside his planned vengeance against the sorceror-kings, Tonlaa sent a letter of introduction to the owner of the estate—a wealthy nobleman, Brandor by Name. Brandor, fearing Tonlaa's reputation, admitted him immediately to his estate and fawned over him as a lap dog fawns on its master. Whatever Tonlaa wanted, Brandor would give him, even if Tonlaa happened to desire one of Brandor's lovely daughters. Indeed, Brandor was ready to give Tonlaa all of them, if such a gift meant that he need not fear the great warrior's anger.

But the young woman Tonlaa loved, whose Name was Enard, was not so easily persuaded. Though she loved him the moment she looked on him and knew she would gladly live by his side forever, she saw no reason to give up her only chance to be extravagantly courted. Indeed, many young men other than Tonlaa were seeking Enard's hand, and she wished to see how well the handsome warrior would do against all the others. If Tonlaa wished to win her, he would have to woo her. Now Enard was a witty young girl and wanted to be wooed by a man of subtle words. But Tonlaa was a man of actions and expected to sweep Enard away. Enard refused to be swept, and Tonlaa grew impatient and angry.

Raising a company of ferociously loyal mercenaries and bandits, Tonlaa laid seige to Barhurst and slew many of its defenders. But Enard did not give in. Instead, she sent messages to her many other princely suitors, asking them to send their own armies against Tonlaa. Like the great warrior he was, Tonlaa beat back the first of these armies, but the struggle to defeat this foe cost Tonlaa half his men. So Tonlaa demanded—and received—new soldiers from the many barons and princelings who owed him favors for destroying threats to their realms. He led this larger army against all who came against him, and after much death and suffering on both sides, the armies of Enard's suitors fell back. But once again, Enard did not give in. She had grown to like the smell of blood, and so she trained her own people as mighty fighters and led them herself onto the field of battle.

Meanwhile, the barons and princelings that Tonlaa had once aided saw their finest fighters dying like dogs and grew reluctant to give him more. No longer able to demand what he wanted from them, Tonlaa learned to persuade. The great warrior became witty and wise, learning to wield the weapons of blackmail, intrigue, and a quick tongue in the same way that Enard had learned the catapult and the arbalest. As Tonlaa fought to retain his army, troops of romantic men from all around the world flocked to Enard's side, ready to die to defend her honor.

The siege of Barhurst continued for twelve years, three months, and four days until the last few bedraggled fighters on each side slew one another, leaving Tonlaa and Enard alone on the field of battle. Their fighting done, the two lovers fell into one another's arms and lived in bliss forever. Indeed, it is said their passions ran so strong that Tonlaa and Enard never died, but live and love even to this day.

JUSTICE OF HORRORS

It was a busy day at the bazaar. Hawkers' cries filled the air, along with a thousand heady smells, from rare perfumes to grilled meats. Behind one of a dozen snack stalls stood a pair of ragged fellows—a grimy dwarf with a wandering eye and a young human with a peg leg. The human reached forward to flip the greasy-looking fish cakes on their sizzling grill.

"What d'you mean, Berelica, there's worse things to be than lousy fish cake sellers?" the human complained. "I can't think of nothin'—"

"Y'isn't thinkin' hard enough then, Gwando," said the dwarf, settling back onto a stool. "There's justicers, isn't there?"

"Justicers? I'd give anything to be—you know how rich they is, Berelica?"

"Sure, they's rich." Berelica leaned forward to whisper in Gwando's ear. "But they's evil. Most of them is monsters in disguise. Horrors."

"You's pullin' my leg again, Berelica."

"You's got no leg to pull. I tells you truth. 'Tall goes back to long-ago times, Gwando. See, there was this elf queen, her name was—"

"Elf queen? They's all real fine, isn't they?"

"Shuddup and listen to this story, Gwando. Maybe you learn something. This elf queen, Minelius, she was smarter and stronger than anybody. She united all the races together—us dwarfs, you humans, orks—even all them squabbling trolls she united together. So all Barsaive was all together, one big kingdom, everybody happy, everybody got food to eat, right? So everybody happy for years, till finally even Minelius has to die. So she be lying on her deathbed, wondering which of her children to give Barsaive to.

"Trouble is, all of 'em's good choices. Her oldest son, Roductil, he's a mighty archer—he protect Barsaive from its enemies. Her oldest daughter, Fectivia, very smart—she know all the best ways to win wars. The middle son, Truitemel, everybody love him and want to follow him. The youngest daughter, Falschidil, she got real good magics. And the youngest son, I forget his name, he know all the secrets of the olden times that happened even back before the olden times.

"So she lies there dying and worrying, and along comes this elf, tall and fine with this real smart look in her eyes. And the elf says, 'Never fear, Queen Minelius. I know the answer, because I am a justicer.' Minelius says, 'Justicer? What's that?' Because this was the olden times, before justicers even were invented. This woman—Laroid, that's her name—was the first one. She says, 'I will devise a just solution for your problem.' So Laroid tells Minelius to chop Barsaive up into five pieces, give one part to each child so each gets to be king or queen of their piece of the land.

"Now, this don't sound too bad because Barsaive pretty big place, right? So Minelius agrees and she dies and the children get a piece of the land and they all get along fine—well, there's a few little wars between Roductil and Fectivia, few people killed, but nothin' too big—mostly there's happiness all around still.

"But then the new kings and queens get old and die, and they have same problem. They all got bunches of heirs to decide from, and even though some of them kids not so smart this time, they all wants to take over their parents' kingdoms. And one by one, as the kings and queens die off, Laroid shows up at each one's deathbed, saying, 'Never fear; I have the answer, because I am a justicer.' And she tells each queen and king to divide their kingdoms up between their children, so pretty soon Barsaive goes from one kingdom to five kingdoms to twenty-three kingdoms.

"So this keeps on going for many years. Each time a ruler dies, all the children divide up the land, so there's more and more kingdoms getting smaller and smaller. One king, great-great grandson of Fectivia, he think Laroid's idea stinks. He has a contest between his children over who gets to keep his kingdom, and makes them all promise never to split their kingdom up into bits like all the others are doing. So finally, after many, many years, there's this one big kingdom left—well, big compared to the other ones now—this kingdom of Lesser Fectivia. And all the other kingdoms in Barsaive got just one person in 'em, everybody a king and nobody a subject. So everything gets all confused, and since everybody's a ruler, even the smallest argument turns into wars. So there's smiting and killing all over, and nobody has an army or nothin' except for the queen of Lesser Fectivia.

"Then the justicer, Laroid, shows up to the queen of Lesser Fectivia, and queen says, 'You can't make me change to your ways. You see the ruin you brought to Barsaive, which was once united all together and full of peace and happiness?'

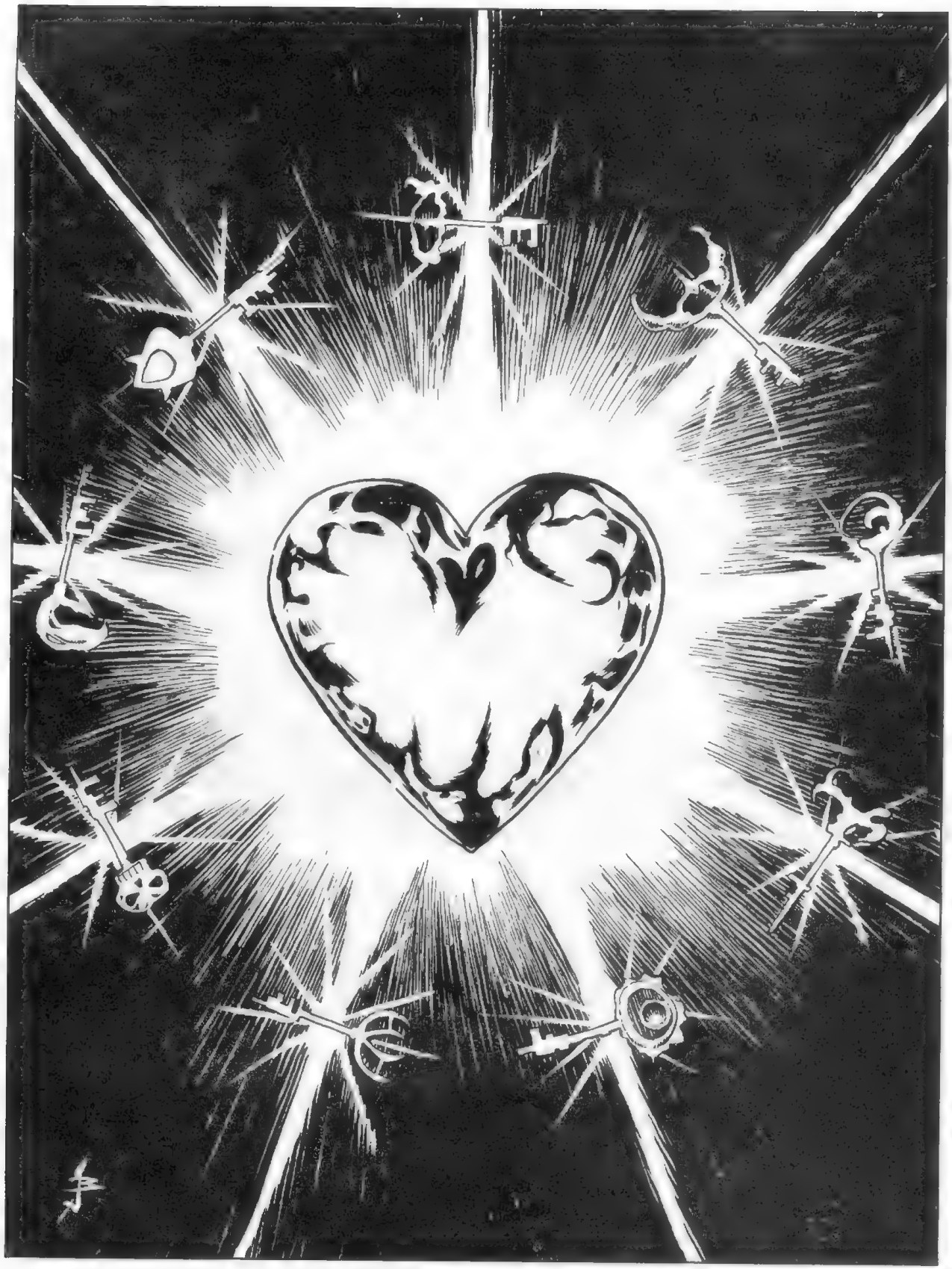
"And Laroid says, 'Of course I see the ruin I brought, for that was my plan. I'm not an elf, I'm a Horror. My kin from beyond this world sent me ahead to sow discord and disaster among you before they come to lay waste to your world. That's why I invented justicers. And now you die.'

"And so Laroid shucked off her skin, and she looked like a giant crayfish with a thousand slurping mouths, and she cut the Queen of Lesser Fectivia to bits and devoured her right there on the spot, while her courtiers all looked on with their jaws hanging all out. And the Horrors came and killed everyone easy, with no armies to put up a fight and no unity to inspire courage.

"And that's why you should never trust justicers, Gwando. The first one of 'em was a Horror, and we all know there's still Horrors about, so any justicer you meet might be a monster in disguise."

The human frowned, scratched his head and pulled at his lower lip as if these gestures would set his slow brain to working. After a long few minutes, he turned to his dwarf companion. "I just got one question, Berelica. If the Horrors ate everybody in Lesser Fectivia, who was left for that story to be remembered?"

"Shuddup, Gwando. You don't understand nothing about legends."



THE HEART OF HEROES

Gaze up at the night sky, my gracious friends, and marvel at the constellations hanging there. The Hunter, the Mountain, the Great Oak, the Air Dancer, the Butterfly, the Horse, the Ship, the Sleeping Warrior, and the Winged Snake. All familiar, yet all wondrous, these gems of the sky each point the way toward the Heart of Heroes.

The Heart of Heroes holds within it the Nine True Names, each Name the essence of a noble Name-giver race. Without our Names, we would be as the animals, ephemeral as soap bubbles, unable to make a mark upon our world! Only by the shaping of our own patterns, our own destinies, can we forge the destiny of our people and our world. And among all the true Names of our Universe, the Nine True Names of the Heart of Heroes are shining beacons to light the dim path of destiny, shimmering swords to cut to the heart of the Universe's secrets, miraculous healing balms to right the greatest wrongs.

In times long past, eons before the terrors of the Scourge, nine heroes placed the secrets of their Names within a magical treasure greater and more powerful than any the world has seen before or since. This magical treasure is the Heart of Heroes, forged of purest orichalcum and imbued with the essences of the nine adventurers who created it. These heroes embodied the truest, best qualities of each of the Name-giver races. Indeed, it is said that the exploits of these nine adventurers shaped the natures of each Name-giver race for all time to come. The Nine True Names are the first Names of us all, and therein lies their tremendous power.

The Heart of Heroes is beautiful beyond anything else in existence. The smile of an innocent child, the strains of the sweetest love song, the brilliant grace of the rising sun on the clearest day—all these things are as withered leaves beside the beauty of the Heart. The Heart of Heroes fits within a troll's palm, and in it the adventurers carved nine filigreed keyholes. Each one of the nine keys to the Heart holds the secret of one of the Nine True Names, and can release that secret to the holder of that key.

When these great heroes created the Heart and its keys, each of them swore to hide their key in a place known only to them. They left us clues to the hiding places in ancient poems and songs, so that we, their descendants, may uncover and use the power of the Nine Names in our hour of need. No one knows where the keys are now, nor where the Heart lies hidden. But the Universe itself gave us the most valuable clue of all—the very stars above our heads. Ninety-nine days after the Heart of Heroes was forged, each of the nine adventurers vanished from Barsaive. On that same night, sages and wizards saw for the first time the nine constellations that to our eyes are so dear: the Hunter, stars of the humans; the Mountain, stars of the dwarfs; the Ship, stars of the t'skrang; the Great Oak, stars of the elves; the Air Dancer, stars of the trolls; the Butterfly, stars of the windlings; the Horse, stars of the orks; the Sleeping Warrior, stars of the obsidimen; and the Winged Snake, that some call the stars of the dragons.

THE HORROR STORM

The great city of Tisoara, in the ancient kingdom of Landis, was once renowned for its magic. Elementalists, wizards, and magicians of all kinds came to Tisoara to learn and teach, and the city grew and prospered. And when the Scourge drew nigh, and all the world cowered in terror of what was to come, the folk of Tisoara said, "We are not afraid. The greatest magicians in all Barsaive live within our walls. We will build a citadel so mighty that no Horror can breach it." And so they did. The Citadel of Tisoara was a marvel to behold. Its stone towers reached high into the sky, and its walls stood a mile thick. A huge, shimmering dome of elemental air enclosed it, and the people within felt as safe and comforted as a child wrapped in its mother's arms.

The first hundred years of the Scourge passed without incident for Tisoara. The few Horrors that tried to breach the dome and the walls all failed and died. And the people of Tisoara smiled, because these attempts proved they had nothing to fear. Only one magician said otherwise—Varena, the most learned elementalist in the citadel. Varena warned the people to be ever vigilant and not to forget that Horrors might come in many guises.

A year and a day passed by, and then one day the sky above the citadel began to darken. Storm clouds gathered, black and threatening. Then the sky opened with a searing flash of light and a crack as if the very earth had split in two and the rain came pouring down upon the dome of elemental air—a dark and foul rain that burned the dome wherever it fell. Storm winds shrieked and howled and tore at the dome, and lightning bolts sizzled and cracked against the citadel's defenses. And the people of Tisoara saw that this was no ordinary tempest, but a storm of Horrors. And for the first time, many of them knew fear.

Only Varena was not afraid. She had raised the dome to protect the citadel, and she knew a way to use the same magic to end the storm of Horrors. Taking a piece of purest crystal the size of a troll's fist, Varena performed a dangerous rite of blood magic and trapped the Horror storm within the stone. When the last word was spoken and the last gesture made, the clear crystal had turned the color of smoke, lit from within by occasional flashes of lightning.

The people of Tisoara rejoiced and praised Varena as their savior, but Varena knew she had won only a temporary victory. In secret, she performed the same rite of blood magic once every year to keep the Horror storm within the crystal. She grew weaker and weaker each time. When she grew too weak to keep the storm bound, she passed the crystal to her apprentice, who likewise performed blood magic to bind the Horror storm. And so down all the years of the Scourge, those who followed in Varena's footsteps guarded the crystal and kept the Horror storm trapped within it.

In the final century of the Scourge, the guardian of the crystal discovered a way to use its magic to strengthen the dome of elemental air. The mage used the power of the Horror storm itself to protect Tisoara from the other Horrors that threatened it. And though the Horror storm tried mightily to taint the minds and hearts of the guardians who used its power, not one of them succumbed to the Horrors' touch. Not one of them ever turned aside from the true path of the protector.

At long last, the Scourge ended, and the magicians of Tisoara opened the dome for the first time in four hundred years. And the people wept for joy, because they need not fear the Horrors any more. No one was more joyful than Tigana, guardian of the crystal.

With the ending of the Scourge, Tisoara no longer needed the power of the Horror storm to protect it—and so Tigana sought a way to destroy the Horror storm forever. For many months she studied, always alone. Then one day, Tigana and the crystal disappeared from Tisoara. Some say the Horror storm corrupted the last guardian. Others say Tigana destroyed the crystal and herself. But no one has seen them since, and no one knows their fate.

THE BRIGHTEST STAR IN THE SKY

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Look up at the stars, wheeling and turning in their endless dance in the skies of Barsaive. Look at them and marvel, in memory of the time not so long ago when the peoples of the world could see nothing overhead but the blackness of rock and soil. Most of all, look into the sky and see the brightest star of all. This star is Named Findas's Flight, and the story of its birth is full of wonder.

Nonan Findas was an elementalist, among the greatest magicians of his time. He was a Theran, but a good and decent man for all that. It was Findas who studied the magics of elemental earth and gave the world the knowledge of how to build kaers as protection against the Horrors. Yet Findas himself forswore this protection, fearing that it would not be enough.

Findas knew that a shield of elemental earth would keep the Horrors at bay, but he also saw that all the kaers and citadels built on or under the earth had one weakness: such shelters shared the world with the Horrors. And though the magic could repel them, it was possible that over many years the Horrors could simply batter down the kaer walls as a thief batters down the locked door of a house. Findas's fears were well-founded, as every Name-giver in Barsaive knows. So even as the peoples of the world rushed to build kaers and citadels, Findas turned to his studies and sought a way to build a kaer high above the earth, where the Horrors that roamed the land could not touch it.

Before too long, Findas found a way to make the heavy stone and earth of a kaer float high above the ground, as if it was as light as a feather in the wind. He spoke to many Theran nobles, seeking funds with which to build and found many ears willing to listen to his words. Together, Findas and the nobles built their stone kaer, racing against the dwindling sands of time. For the Horrors were coming in greater and greater numbers, and the dawning of the Scourge was drawing near.

At last, the kaer was finished, and those who had built it moved their families and possessions inside. And Findas went to the Theran noble who had first agreed to aid him, and said, "After you have gone in, I will seal the kaer shut. Then I will perform the magic that will send it into the sky."

The noble thanked Findas and walked toward the kaer, then stopped as he realized that Findas was not behind him. He turned to look at the magician, saying, "Why are you still standing there? Make haste, and come inside!"

"I am not coming with you," said Findas, his voice serene and his eyes full of sadness. "To perform the magic that will launch the kaer above the earth, I must stand upon the soil and draw its magic into my body. I cannot do it from behind the kaer's walls."

The noble bowed before Findas, saying, "All our generations will remember that we owe our lives to your sacrifice. By all the Passions, this I swear." And he went into the kaer, his heart heavy with sorrow.

As soon as the noble had gone inside, Findas spoke the words of power to seal the kaer. Then he raised his arms, and began to chant the Song of Power to raise the kaer above the earth. The song raised a great storm, and the sky above turned dark. And Findas stood in the midst of the tempest, working his magic, watching the kaer rise higher and higher.

The song that Findas sang has been lost to the mists of time, and no one knows if any Horrors ever touched the floating kaer. But if you look into the night skies of western Barsaive, by the shores of the Selestrean Sea, the brightest star that shines is said to be the kaer that Findas built.

THE PIPES OF WRONGNESS

Barsaive has survived the Scourge, but the Horrors left their evil mark all across the land and on all of its people. Harken to the tale of Elena and the Pipes of Wrongness and know that the battle against the Horrors has only just begun.

Elena was a windling troubadour of great skill who traveled the land with her human partner and friend, Delphina. Delphina had a sweet voice, and Elena could play any musical instrument as if she had been born with it in her hand. They performed together at many a gathering and shared all their hardships, joys, and secrets. Sometimes they told stories, sometimes they danced, and sometimes they sang.

During their travels one year, they came to a village deep in Barsaive's wilds. The village folk greeted them warily, and only with great difficulty did Elena persuade them to shelter her and Delphina for the night. Elena would have passed the village by, but Delphina was weary, both of them were hungry, and neither wished to dare the uncertain perils of a dark night in the open.

So the two troubadours entered the village and ate with its people around the evening fire. As payment for their food, Elena and Delphina began to sing an ancient song of Throal, giving thanks for a bountiful harvest. But their simple song, rather than putting the villagers at ease, only seemed to frighten them. At the end of the song, the village headwoman hustled the troubadours to their beds in her own barn, and no one spoke a word to them as they left the fireside.

When Elena and Delphina woke the next morning, all the villagers had gone to their fields. Not one had remained to bid them a courteous farewell. The troubadours walked away from the village, and as they walked Elena's uneasiness grew. They rested beside a stream, and when Elena opened her pack to remove a piece of bread, she knew what had caused her feeling. There, on top of her clothing and provisions, lay a set of pipes, beautifully wrought of pewter and covered with delicate runes. Elena picked them up, and they felt cold to her touch.

Suddenly she wanted to blow them, to hear their melody. This desire frightened her, for she had felt a Horror-taint in the chill metal and knew that such an act could only bring evil upon them.

Elena brought out the food, saying nothing of the pipes. Later, while Delphina washed her face in the stream, Elena hid the pipes under a small rock.

Many days later, while journeying between two towns in the hinterlands, Elena and Delphina met three rough orks. All rode fine horses and led a dozen more that bore saddle and tackle worthy of a prince. Their leader, a large ork with battered plate armor and a broken tusk, called to the two troubadours, saying, "Buy a fine steed and rest your weary feet! Only a hundred silver pieces—a bargain!"

Delphina answered, "I am very fond of the ork delicacy of roasted horse hearts with hazelnut sauce. It seems to me your horses are hot enough to serve."

This answer angered the orks, for it showed that Delphina knew the horses were stolen. As one, the orks rushed upon the troubadours with drawn swords. Delphina drew her own sword, and Elena readied her dagger. Then she reached into her pack for the second dagger she always carried, and her fingers closed around the cold pewter pipes.

Before Elena could throw the pipes away, the orks were upon them. The troubadours fought fiercely and slew one of the orks, but the two others wore them down. Elena saw that Delphina was bleeding from a dozen small wounds, and she knew that her friend's strength would not last much longer. Suddenly, she felt an overwhelming desire to blow on the pipes. A voice seemed to whisper in Elena's ear that only the magic of the pipes could save Delphina. As if in a trance, Elena raised the pipes to her lips.

The shriek of the pipes split the air, yet it seemed that only Elena could hear it. Delphina and the two orks fought on, unheeding. Suddenly, a Horror the size of an ox appeared, bloated and gray, with blood-red tentacles that dripped green ichor. It seized both orks and thrust them into its gaping mouth. Elena shouted to Delphina to run, but Delphina was transfixed with terror. Too late, she took a step away; the Horror flicked its tentacles around her and dragged her, screaming and struggling, into its dreadful maw.

Sick with fear and shame, Elena dropped the pipes and flew away. She did not stop until sunset, and only then because weariness forced her. Desperate for a crumb of food, she opened her pack—and saw the pipes nestled inside.

No matter how hard she tried, Elena could not rid herself of the pipes. She threw them to the bottom of a deep ravine, dropped them over the side of a t'skrang river boat in the deepest part of the Serpent River, hurled them from the deck of an airship and dashed them to pieces on the teeth of the Dragon Mountains; but still they reappeared in her pack, gleaming and cold and beautiful. In despair, Elena traveled deep into the wilderness where no Name-giver lived, and there she blew on the pipes. She closed her eyes, expecting to feel the hot breath of the Horror as it came to devour her, just as it had devoured Delphina. The shriek of the pipes died away, but nothing happened. Elena opened her eyes. No Horror lurked nearby, and all seemed tranquil. Elena buried her head in her hands, and sat still for a long time. When she looked up, she saw a man before her.

He was old and thin, with sunken cheeks and lank white hair. His skin hung on his body as if there were no flesh between it and his bones. Graveyard earth covered his tattered clothes. Too deep in despair to feel any fear of this apparition, Elena asked him his Name.

"I am Jamis," he said. "I am a gift from Fla Tra Lys, the Eater of Music. I will serve you faithfully for a year and a day. For that time, I am your slave. You may beat me or starve me, but I must serve you. You may drive me away, but I will return to serve you. If you slay me, my body will rise from the dead and as it rots it will serve you.

"After a year and a day, Fla Tra Lys will claim me. The Horror will sweep over us both like the fall of night. You will sink into the ground, sleeping as though dead. And in that sleep, dreams will come, dreams of the Eater of Music. You will not awaken until the Pipes of Wrongness summon you. Then you will be as I am, the slave of the fool who made the Horror's music. So it shall be until the end of Time."

With a strangled cry, Elena hurled the Pipes of Wrongness as far from her as she could. Then she unsheathed her dagger and buried it in her own heart. No soul has seen the Pipes of Wrongness since that day, though some have heard their cold scream in the depths of the darkest nights.

NEW SUN IN A NEW SKY

In the days when the Spirit Mother made all things, a child was born to Tschlome the Sun and Syrtis the Moon. This child was Named Hurrn, and for many years she lived all alone, enclosed in a milk-white shell. Hurrn did not know her parents, or the Spirit Mother, or her uncle Shivos the Earth, or her aunt Shivoam, the Serpent River. Hurrn knew only herself, and the shell that surrounded her. In time, the loneliness made Hurrn sick with belly-gas. Hurrn's body grew larger and larger, until the milk-white shell burst. Then Hurrn's body became the sky, shaped like the milk-white shell and enclosing all the world within it.

The world lived in darkness under Hurrn, the Skyshell. All the grandchildren of the Spirit Mother lived in darkness: the dragons, the windlings, the t'skrang, the obsidimen, and the other races who came later. They could not see the Sun nor the Moon, for the Skyshell hid these things from them.

dicted, and won't put up a fight with the party if caught unless it's forced on them.

If Degado and Bluestone are turned over to Torgak, they will probably end up as citizens of Haven, working for Torgak. If the party tries to keep them, they will attempt to escape early and often. If Davron is with them, all three will stick together, and not escape unless they think they will all make it.

The Slaves from Malakai's Camp

Yara is the seventeen-year old daughter of the elder of a kaer three days travel to the southwest of Parlainth. She ran away from home, and now only wants to go back. If the party agrees to escort her home, she promises all kinds of rewards. She will not, however, go traipsing about with them in Parlainth. If she is deposited back in Haven on her own, she will not be there when the party returns. If the party does agree to take her home, at the very least the father will gladly give them an Elemental Earth Coin, and possibly even a plot hook into another adventure.

Zarik Thunderaxe is a dwarven merchant who was picked up by Malakai's group when he went out seeking to purchase Elemental Water from an old Ork Elementalist that lives on the outskirts of the Smalls. If the party assists him back to town with clothing, he'll thank them profusely, and begin to reassemble his caravan. If the adventurers return to Haven after their fight in the temple, Zarik will pay for their meals, and their room and board, and offer to pay them as guards if they'll escort him and the remnants of his merchandise to Throal. If the Gamemaster wishes, he could even have royal kin, who take note of their cousin's rescue by a bold band of adventurers, and who might require such heroes for other more-pressing services ....

Fia Brokenhoof is an ork mercenary, and will thank the party as well for her rescue. She will offer to assist the party in their fight. If the characters decide it is in her best interest to rest and recover in Haven, (which it is) she will thank them, and when the party returns, they will find a message from her at the Restless Troll. She will have joined a caravan, and left ten silver, her first week's wages, for them. If Zarik also survived, she has joined his caravan as a guard.

Kel's Legbreakers

The responses of Kel's Legbreakers towards the characters after the adventure will depend greatly on which ones are still alive after they encountered the characters. If none of the members of Kel's Legbreakers mentioned in this adventure survive, then the rest of the gang probably won't like the characters, but they won't do anything to them either. If the characters were strong enough to beat all of their leaders, then they don't want a fight.

If Kelizalth survived, he is going to want to redeem what he sees as a loss of face. He will try to pick a fight with the party leader at an opportune moment. If he loses, then the characters will have the grudging respect of the ork. If he wins, however, he'll feel like whatever status the gang has lost will be restored. Kelizalth is a dirty fighter and should give whoever he chooses to brawl with a tough fight.